SPACE, GENDER, *and* MEMORY *in* MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE

ARCHITECTURES *of* WONDER *in* MELUSINE

Jan Shaw

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Architectures of Wonder in *Melusine*

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For my daughter
and
in memory of my mother

CONTENTS

Introduction

When we take a close look at the myth of Melusine, its range of diffusion, its different versions, we are in fact investigating something that attracts us, fascinates us even, like a mystery, a key to our identity.

Luce Irigaray[1]

The thesis of this book is that the figure of Melusine offers a space for the contemplation of late medieval feminine subjecthood. The Middle English *Melusine*[2] offers a particularly rich source for such a study as it presents the story of a powerful fairy/human woman who desires a full human life—and death—within a literary tradition that is more friendly to women's agency than its continental counterparts. *Melusine* raises questions about what is at stake in women's self-determination, about narratives of identity and women's place in the divine order, about cultural and genealogical memory, about spatial practices of gendered bodies in the built environment, and how these are narrativized in the medieval imagination. The tale also considers how these processes play out in familial and social contexts. This book takes the figure of Melusine seriously—as a woman and a potential subject in love—in the community and in genealogical memory. Rather than focusing on the nature of fairies and the otherworld, although references are made to these things, this book reads Melusine as a potential feminine subject. Moreover, it treats this potentiality as an idea that could be formed within the learned and cultural discourses of its time.

The tale[3] of *Melusine* tells the story of a powerful human/fairy figure who marries the fully human Raimondin on condition that he does not seek her out on Saturdays. Their marriage is based on mutual affection and trust, and their domestic life is depicted as companionable and harmonious. It is also enormously successful in a material sense; her financial resources and political acumen, when coupled with his family connections, are a potent mix. Melusine is the prime mover, building castles and cities, guiding Raimondin and later their sons with political and ethical advice. She is the founding mother of a dynasty that reclaims lost patrimonial estates and spreads its reach eastward, toward the holy land. Melusine is born of a fairy mother and a human father, and this mixed nature is foregrounded in the hybrid form she assumes every Saturday. This form, however, is not an inevitable consequence of her hybrid nature; it is imposed upon her by her mother, Pressine. Melusine and her two sisters transgress against their parents when they are fifteen years old, and as a result, Pressine imposes conditions upon each of them. Melusine alone undergoes the weekly bodily metamorphosis. If Melusine wishes to live a human life and die a human death, she must find a human husband who will agree not to see her on Saturdays—when she assumes this hybrid form—and never to reveal this agreement to any other person.[4]

There have been many interesting and divergent readings of Melusine's fairy nature and her hybrid form. Numerous early studies trace the tale and Melusine's fairy nature to folkloric and mythological sources.[5] Much interpretative effort has also been focused on determining Melusine's place in a good/evil dichotomy: she is either a productive benevolent force, Jacques Le Goff's oft-quoted "fairy of medieval economic growth,"[6] or a demonic manifestation.[7] Kristina Pérez reads her as a largely negative figure, an Oresteian mother, who steals Raimondin's subjectivity.[8] For others, she is a problematic figure, not wholly bad but a bearer of dangerous gifts.[9] Laurence Harf-Lancner makes a more positive reading but allows Melusine less agency. For Harf-Lancner, Melusine is a conquered fairy: she is subjugated by love and bends to the human law of her beloved.[10] The foregrounding of Melusine's fairy nature in this way suggests that her humanity is not relevant; her otherness is key.[11] Interest lies not in her sameness but in her difference, a difference that is unsettling and problematic—that destabilizes. The proportion of her otherness to her sameness is not of interest; it is the fact of that otherness. It is the existence of any difference at all. It would seem that her alterity compromises even that part of her which is human. In these readings Melusine's alterity is the negation of humanity.

Acknowledging the human aspect that is necessarily a part of Melusine's hybridity does not guarantee a better outcome for that humanity. For most critics who discuss Melusine's hybridity, it is the ambiguity, the categorical indeterminacy, the boundary transgression that would have been deeply troubling to the medieval mind, overriding any interest in the constitution of the two parts that make up the hybrid whole.[12] Sylvia Huot reads Melusine's hybridity as an uncomfortable tension even for Melusine herself. Huot argues that Melusine "seems caught in a double or mutual repudiation, fairyhood rebelling against humanity, which in turn asserts itself against fairyhood."[13] The "mother marks" of Melusine's children also present a lingering reminder of her own dual nature as a monstrous mix. While her sons are fully human, they each bear a birthmark that is so disproportionately large as to be more a monster mark than a mother mark. For Gabrielle M. Spiegel these mother marks are overtly visible evidence of a "categorical confusion" that underpins social and political decay at the end of the fourteenth century in France.[14] Others interpret Melusine's hybridity and her sons' mother marks neutrally: her hybridity as simply emblematic of her dual nature,[15] and her sons' incrementally reducing mother marks as symbolizing her own ever-increasing humanization.[16] E. Jane Burns finds a positive end in Melusine's hybridity. As a monstrous composite of a woman and a serpent, Burns identifies her as an Eve figure, but one that has been rewritten positively, her fluid boundaries legitimating the political change and imperialist expansion that the text celebrates.[17] Once again the human element is compromised, with hybridity read as the monstrosity of the broken boundaries, particularly of boundaries of bodily form.

All of this might suggest that Melusine's position as a fairy/human makes her humanity ultimately irretrievable, that her partial fairy nature and/or her hybrid form overrides any claim she has to a human nature or being a human woman. Before this conclusion is reached, however, it is important to remember that in the medieval imagination, women were always already both hybrid and monstrous creatures. This is demonstrated consistently through a number of authoritative medieval discourses. For example, R. Howard Bloch has argued that medieval church fathers privileged the second biblical creation story over the first, lending divine authority to the priority of man as the "original unity of being" that comes directly from God in the second creation story.[18] In this version, Adam was formed in the image of God and Eve was produced from Adam's rib. According to Augustine, "All good is from God, hence there is no natural

existence which is not from God."[19] Woman is not from God, but from man; therefore, she has no "natural existence." Woman is positioned as a by-product, an "offshoot of division and difference." She comes into being as "part of a body," in a second step of potentially multiple "modes of degradation."[20] For Bloch this is one of "the great topoi of gender in the West at least since Augustine" that "man is undivided, asexual, pure spirit, while woman remains a divided being whose body does not reflect the reality of the soul."[21] In this view, woman is half-spiritual and half-material. She is a hybrid, only ever half-human.

Women's monstrosity[22] was also a favorite trope of and perhaps most clearly evident in medical discourses.[23] Paradoxically, while women's bodies were formed for procreation (presumably by God), monstrosity was embedded in their procreative function. On the one hand these processes were of course essential to the continuation of family and lineage; on the other hand, they betrayed mysterious capacities with unpredictable outcomes.[24] In Galenic physiology, both male and female bodies were vessels that contained fluids and vapors, but the lack of closure in the female body caused concern—they leaked. Menstrual fluid and vapors harbored "signs of monstrosity" and threatened contamination to both husbands and children.[25] The lack of form also made women's bodies monstrous. Menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth evidenced the capacity of the female body to change form, or rather, its incapacity to hold form.[26] Following Aristotle, the mother's contribution to procreation was limited to "matter," while the father contributed "form." The bodily mutability of procreating women evidenced that they had no form of their own. Women's bodies were defective male bodies; they were male bodies insufficiently formed.[27] Ruth Mazo Karras emphasizes that the belief that females were "defective males" should not be mistaken for an indication that female and male bodies were considered to be similar. On the contrary, the defects of the female form were sufficient to place women in a completely different category from men, lower in the hierarchy.[28]

These kinds of beliefs, voiced through privileged discourses, were deeply influential in forming the medieval imagination, and they underpinned mainstream cultural narratives about women. Women—in religious, philosophical, medical, and legal terms—were cast as lesser beings than men, legitimating their subjection to men.[29] The "natural" condition of women was therefore to be subjugated, but also, due to their weaknesses and ungovernable desires, they had a perverse tendency to resist such subjugation. So, on the one hand, women were stereotyped as uncontrolled and

immoral; but, on the other hand, those characteristics considered "appropriately feminine" were passivity, obedience, and subjugation. Neither side of the dichotomy was, of course, a naturally occurring state. To exhibit "appropriate" feminine characteristics required considerable discipline and self-effacement. Indeed, the proliferation of conduct literature betrays the constructedness of preferred femininities.[30]

This is not to suggest that women in the Middle Ages did not lead productive lives or make a valuable contribution to their family and society. Clearly they did. They lived and worked in communities, and marriage was a partnership in many respects, albeit an unequal one. At the lower end of the social scale, women worked alongside men in the fields.[31] Women's engagement in the mercantile world was often an extension of domestic work, focusing on the victualing and clothing trades: spinsters, candlemakers, embroiderers, and fishwives, for example.[32] In the towns, there is evidence of widows inheriting their husband's trades and being permitted to maintain guild membership (although not as full members).[33] This suggests that these wives at least had played a sufficient role in the business, prior to their husband's death, to enable them to retain the business as a going concern. In her study of women in London in the late Middle Ages, Barbara Hanawalt has shown how, through peculiarities in borough law, women, and particularly widows of the mercantile classes, accumulated capital in proportions unusual for the time. While these women tended to transmit wealth rather than be controllers of it, the accumulation of wealth in their hands and the independence that widowhood would necessarily bring opened up the possibility of participation in the wider world of business and even their own remarriage negotiations.[34] Moreover, women at all social levels had domestic work. Even elite women with many servants at their disposal were most likely responsible for household administration. At the highest socioeconomic levels, the wife might have had a separate household within the larger household that needed to be managed. Despite discourses that idealized femininity as passive and obedient, women at all levels of society were undoubtedly active and contributing members of the family and the community; but under the laws of coverture married women had no separate legal identity from their husbands.[35] Within this heavily gendered world women's contributions were often undervalued and/or subsumed within their husbands' achievements.

It is also important to remember that expectations of love and marriage were very different from what they are today. A husband was the head of the household in custom, religion, and the law. He had the right, but also

the responsibility, to control family members, including children, servants, apprentices, and wife. Wives were sexually, economically, and legally vulnerable to their husbands; they were beholden to their husbands' goodwill for their survival. While the expectation was that he would be a benevolent dictator,[36] the wife had little recourse if the husband made unreasonable demands or was excessively violent. Dissolving marriage was difficult. Recent research into cases of husband desertion heard in the late medieval English court of Chancery shows that wives who ran away risked arrest, public humiliation, charges of theft (even for the clothing on their backs), and forced return to the (possibly violent) marital home under pain of excommunication.[37] Women's financial coverture meant that a deserting wife had no money of her own and so would have been unable to support herself without the help of family or friends, but helpers could in turn find themselves charged with ravishment.[38] If she ran away with another man, or succeeded in her flight and at some later date formed another relationship, she was necessarily guilty of adultery and would forfeit her right to dower upon her husband's death.[39] The power of economic dependence as an inducement to submission was clearly well understood by husbands and the courts of law who enforced their rights. Christine de Pisan was raised in the French court, became a court poet, and was the first woman to run a professional scriptorium. She wrote prolifically in defense of women against traditional misogynist arguments. Even she—a well-educated widow who supported herself and her family—advised wives to maintain a meek and polite demeanor in the presence of their husbands.[40]

Ideals of femininity—passivity, obedience, and submission—were not qualities that fostered independent thought and action. These ideals were clearly at odds with the lives of most medieval women who showed initiative and determination every day of their active lives.[41] Nevertheless, these ideals were ever-present in discourses that legitimated control of men over women and adjudicated between them if relationship breakdown occurred. Even if individual women and men never came into contact with legal or medical discourses, both were socialized to accept masculine entitlement, and religious teachings reinforced the hierarchy between men and women, body and soul. Even the most basic of Christian teachings gave precedence to men and placed them closer to God. Women, on the other hand, were burdened by the curse of Eve and should strive for the impossible perfection of Mary. Within their very selves women were divided creatures; the tensions between real life and ideals were mechanisms of control that worked to keep women always within bounds. The text of *Melusine*

similarly presents a divided feminine self. A good wife and mother, meek and polite in relations with her husband, Melusine is also extraordinarily productive. Her monstrosity is literalized and foregrounded, and, just like medieval women in the real world, this monstrosity is a mark of apparent personal failure that she spends the rest of her life striving to redeem.

Of course, romance is imaginative literature; it is not reality. Nor is it completely divorced from reality. Romance literature, like all cultural production, engages directly with the culture in which it is produced. Elements of culture are reproduced in literature, but literature also influences culture by offering up an interpretation of that culture to itself; it reflects back to society how society sees itself, imagines itself to be, or would like to be and also comments upon these imaginings. The matter of medieval romance was the lives of kings and queens, emperors and empresses, or dukes and duchesses, including the adventures of questing knights and princes to win the hand of princesses threatened with ravishment from inappropriate suitors. While narratives of masculine quest, marvelous adventure, the hero's demonstration of prowess, and the gaining of honor often overshadowed the trials of love, wooing and marriage were characteristics of romance that developed strongly through the Middle Ages. This development had its own trajectory in English romance, which celebrated mutual affection and trust between lovers and frequently presented women as active, desiring subjects. These tales are often read as wish-fulfillment stories for the younger sons of the nobility who were disenfranchised by the rise in primogeniture: the tales grant them the prize of a wealthy heiress. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of reading them also from the female point of view. Feminine wish-fulfillment can also be perceived in these stories of agentive heroines who choose their own man, secure his rise in the ranks (if necessary), and influence their fathers (or other patriarchal representatives) to secure their preferred marriage. Real social difficulties, such as enforced marriage, rape, or feminine agency gone too far, are evident in romance but managed in ways that deflect them from the forefront of the narrative. Heroines of forced marriages regularly find ways to avoid consummation of the unwanted marriage until their true lover returns; rape tends to linger as a potential threat rather than becoming real on the page;[42] and excessive feminine power is recast as magical.[43] The heroine's choice in marriage is, however, foregrounded as central to her story; feminine desire is thereby acknowledged and legitimized.

The text of *Melusine* engages with all of these issues that intersect with women's experience of reality. The narrative rescues maidens from potential

ravishment while at the same time critiquing enforced marriage and high-lighting the violence that patriarchal social structures inflict on daughters. It presents wish-fulfillment narratives that satisfy the different ambitions of both male and female protagonists, offering the hero a wealthy heiress and the heroine the husband of her choice. Furthermore, it casts substantial and potentially dangerous feminine agency as the magical operation of the fairy world. The figure of Melusine engages with the split feminine self in ways that acknowledge the divided self of medieval womanhood, but it also reworks this monstrosity differently from the mechanisms peddled by misogynist discourses. In Melusine the monstrosity that is the split self is appropriated and transformed into an enabling force.

In this book I argue that the tale of *Melusine* makes a bold move. It reworks the ontological negation of feminine difference, which under-pinned many medieval cultural narratives of gender in the West, into the radical alterity of feminine subjecthood. Indeed, I read the figure of Melusine herself as a space for the contemplation of feminine subjecthood. Rather than relegate Melusine's agency as a mysterious fairy power, I argue that the tale takes this agency seriously as a demonstration of potential feminine capacity. Moreover, I contend that Pressine's taboos are mecha-nisms to enable, enact, and preserve feminine subjecthood in the face of the normative pressures of patriarchal society, not only through the craft-ing of a space from which feminine agency can be launched but also in the construction of a series of generationally parallel memory spaces, within which a maternal genealogy can be preserved and played out into the future. Melusine's hybridity and her sons' monstrous "mother marks" are pointers to Melusine's alterity, to her difference. This is not a negative dif-ference; rather, it is celebrated and authorized in the intrinsic prologue of the text as a "wonder of God." My argument therefore seeks to retrieve Melusine's alterity from ontological negation and to incorporate it as a source of uniqueness and positive difference in the production of the femi-nine subject.

The opening chapter of this book begins with the opening of the tale. Chapter 1 "An Epistemology of Wonder" presents a discussion of wonder as fundamental to the narrative of the text of *Melusine* and as a foundation to the ongoing argument of this book. In the intrinsic prologue the text opens up the potential for ontological difference through the introduction of a taxonomy of being. While there is an acknowledgment that fairies and otherworldly creatures more generally can be problematic in their interactions with humankind, their relation to God, specifically as won-

ders of God as explicated in the taxonomy, sets them apart from human understanding. The wonders of God are positioned in this taxonomy as across the otherworldly line, as ontologically different; this difference, this alterity, makes any attempt to know them a vanity. This acknowledgment of difference underpins the whole narrative: it reconciles the apparent contradictions between Melusine's hybrid nature and her ethics that make her a force for good in the world. This privileging of wonder is further reinforced in the episode of the Boar Hunt, which reveals another example of the textual alignment of the inexplicable and the wondrous within the realm of the divine.

The privileging of wonder over knowledge is reiterated once again in the relationship between Melusine and Raimondin, as discussed in Chapter 2 "Wonder and Love." Recognition of ontological difference heralds a different kind of love relation, one that is uncommon even in the Middle English romance tradition that presents a stronger sense of mutuality between lovers than its continental cousins. In many Middle English romances as relationships move toward marriage the delicate balance of mutuality becomes destabilized. The heroine's agency, which might even extend to the pursuit of her beloved, is often found to follow a trajectory that normalizes passivity. While agentive action might be interesting in a female lover, difference in a wife is more difficult to sustain. Melusine needs to find a husband who will maintain mutuality and accept her difference; such a husband is essential to her existence in the human world. Through the mechanism of the pact, Melusine makes a claim to such alterity. The pact, first and foremost, sets in train a spatial practice that includes cyclical retreat to a place of privacy and reflection that is not available to the scrutiny of others, thereby establishing a space of non-appropriative difference. This place is productive of individual thought and action that can also have an outward trajectory, facilitating engagement with others, which, in this case, produces a different kind of love relation based on equal and opposite movements through space.

Contemporary spatial theories show how space, spatial practice, and the interaction with other such spatialities and practices are co-constitutive. Space is therefore not innocent or naturally occurring. It is evidence of power relations, of normative pressures, of past histories, and forward trajectories. Some of the tensions in gendered medieval spatial practice, particularly the enclosure of women, are explored in Chapter 3 "Building Gender." Feminine enclosure is implicit in architectural form, even that found at the highest social level. Critique of such enclosure can be found

in many Middle English romances that portray the injustices inflicted upon women by broken promises of protection or other intimate betrayals. The tale of *Melusine* engages directly with these discourses, reworking the gender politics of enclosure by shifting the agentive function. Feminine enclosure is preserved, although only once a week, but the key point is that Melusine is subject of her own enclosure rather than occupying the more usual position of wife as object of masculine enclosure. Melusine's spatial existence is a key element in her identity. She literally expands into space, embarking on massive building programs that are extensive and far-reaching, that effect social development and economic prosperity across the land. In this way the tale legitimates feminine activity and free agency, even on a grand scale. Moreover, these activities provide a magnified example of Melusine's independent existence and accession to subject-hood. As a feminine subject she builds her own home (many homes). She lives in a space made by herself to suit her own purposes, rather than endlessly being enclosed within spaces built by others that do not suit her, that are imposed on her by cultural narratives of feminine vulnerability and other gendered dependencies. Melusine builds her own spatiality that sits alongside the prevailing patriarchal system. She interacts with and is in negotiation with it but does not submit to that order.

Melusine builds herself cities and castles that not only are spatial for-tresses but also have a strategic memorial function. Memory is significant in the development of a sense of self, particularly as it pertains to one's location within horizontal and vertical family configurations. It is especially important for women to locate themselves in relation to other women in the family as these relationships are too easily forgotten within patriarchal lineage structures. Chapter 4 "Architectures of Memory" follows closely on from the previous chapter in retaining the architectural theme, but here it moves on to a series of memory rooms that echo the medieval prac-tice of *ars memorativa*. This chapter is concerned with remembering and forgetting, and the subject position of the rememberer, or the forgetter, as the case may be. It moves from the structural and political implications of remembering to the political and gender implications of forgetting. In contrast to the received interpretation that Pressine's taboos are "curses," I argue that the punishments meted out by Pressine to her three daughters are "gyftes" that allow them to reacquaint themselves with their family history. In other words, the taboos of Pressine enable her daughters to sustain their feminine subjecthood in a patriarchal world that insists on strategically forgetting the promises it makes to the feminine. Moreover,

these memory rooms record the maternal genealogy for all who wish to seek it. They provide, indeed they require, a space of engagement with others; they facilitate exchanges and negotiation with others to further enrich the ongoing process that is subjecthood.

The final chapter of the book, "Problematic Pasts and New Beginnings," looks at a different kind of relationship with the past. This chapter considers the problematics of patrimony in The Marriage Tales in *Melusine*, in conversation with two other English prose romances from the fifteenth century, the prose *Siege of Thebes* and *The Prose Life of Alexander*. In all three tales the protagonists experience intergenerational familial strife and signal a movement away from patrilineal legacies; all three gesture toward the need to cut ties with the patrilineal past in order to negotiate a different path to the future. In all three texts the patriline is sidelined in favor of the matriline, in terms of honor, legacy, and a forward-looking perspective. The text of *Melusine* goes further, relegating the patriline on both sides in every generation. It is only in the third generation of Melusine's hybrid sons that the ground shifts. The hybridity of the sons realigns ideas about otherness, breaking down traditional dichotomies and claiming alterity within the self. In so doing it highlights "othering" as a political act rather than an inherent state. At the same time the actions of the sons introduce the prospect that they will be different as husbands and fathers, thereby opening up the possibility of a different kind of future based on mutuality and trust.

In this way the story begins again in the next generation. Melusine's story in the human world began with the negotiation of an enabling love relation, based on the acknowledgment of ontological difference; the marriages of the next generation similarly proceed, opening up a space for a productive future.

A Note on the Text

Both *Melusine* and *The Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen: Otherwise Known as The Tale of Melusine* were translated around 1500,[44] approximately one hundred years after each source was written. The political context of production of the translations was necessarily considerably different from that of the source material. The French version of *Melusine*[45] was written in the late fourteenth century (1382–1394) by Jean d'Arras, a French cleric who was secretary to Jean, Duc de Berry, a staunch supporter of the French faction in the Hundred Years War. This text was

originally written as an elaborate attempt to legitimize the Duc's hold on Lusignan and by extension other Poitevin strongholds, particularly against claimants such as the Parthenay-Larchevêques, whose line of direct inheritance was broken in 1308.[46] Coudrette, writing some ten years after the completion of *d'Arras*,[47] produced a version of the tale that exhibits allegiance to the English faction, most specifically the Larchevêques.[48] Both texts claim a tenuous descent for their patrons from the Lusignan dynasty. *D'Arras* implicitly invokes the connection between the Duc de Berry and his sister the Duchess of Bar, through their Luxembourgian mother Bonne (who was married to the King of France), to Anthony, Melusine's fourth son. More explicit is the closing scene of this version of the tale, which shows Melusine anointing the Duc de Berry's succession to Lusignan. *Coudrette* does not include this material. In contrast, this text extols the virtues of the Larchevêques, and makes its own lineage connections between Guillaume de Parthenay and Thierry, Melusine's youngest son. Further, it closes with an episode that does not appear in *d'Arras*, the additional Palatyne episode.[49]

The tale in both political guises enjoyed considerable success in the following centuries. The number of extant manuscripts of both versions is considerable, although mainly in French.[50] *D'Arras* was repeatedly reproduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in both manuscript form and as printed editions, most specifically in France. *Coudrette* did not appear in France as an edition until 1854. Morris speculates *Coudrette* was less popular in France due to its evident English sympathies.[51] *Coudrette* was, however, the major source of the tale in Germany, where it was translated—and subsequently widely disseminated—and achieved printed form earlier (1474) than *d'Arras* did in French (1478). The German translation of *Coudrette*, made by Thüring von Ringoltingen in 1466, was spectacularly successful, appearing in thirty editions in one hundred and fifty years. Over the next couple of centuries translations of *Coudrette* made their way from the German prose version into northern Europe, including into Polish, Russian, Czech, Danish, and Swedish.[52] Dutch and Spanish translations of *d'Arras* appeared earlier, in the late fifteenth century. While both *Coudrette* and *d'Arras* were translated into English, there is only one extant manuscript of each.[53] Tantalizingly, however, there are also two fragments of an early printed edition of *Melusine*, dated by the Bodleian as approximately 1510.[54]

As noted above, *Melusine* and *Partenay* were translated from French at about the turn of the sixteenth century. By this time the local dynastic

concerns of France a hundred years before had fallen away in the wake of the more interesting notion of a fantastic heroine—founder of cities and conqueror of dynasties. The crusading and converting successes of four of Melusine's sons and the Christian piety of the heroine herself were topical at this time, given the increased military aggression of the Ottoman Turks on the eastern borders of Christian Europe.[55] Further, the change in place positioned *Melusine* and *Partenay* as products of a literary tradition that was associated with but historically different from their sources. In her study of Middle English literature Susan Crane argues that the development of Middle English romance was aligned with the unique development of English political, religious, and cultural life.[56] Crane bases her argument on the notion that the stability of the English barony in the early centuries of this period laid the foundations for the emergence of a rule of law unusually strong for its time; a barony that settled disputes in court rather than in private wars was less likely to romanticize battle.[57] A barony that gained its wealth and status from the administration of land rather than from war and conquest, and whose younger sons must make their own fortunes, was more inclined to value administrative and professional skill than to mystify the nobility of birthright.[58] This tendency to pragmatism was reflected in a literature which did not idealize to the same degree as its continental counterparts: heroes found strength in the law, custom, and justice as much as in military might;[59] faith was subordinated to worldly concerns as pious and morally sensitive heroes upheld the value of earthly reward;[60] and courtly love led to marriage rather than adultery.[61] Within such a context many different emphases of meaning can be drawn from *Melusine* which could not be found in *d'Arras*: Raimondin's land acquisition loses its element of trickery, instead becoming the consequence of a carefully worded legal transaction; his reclamation of his father's lands becomes more a matter of justice and legal order, and less of military power; earthly successes are no longer evidence that his pact with Melusine is demonic; and his unfounded fear that Melusine is adulterous becomes even more blameworthy.

The Middle English *Melusine*, appearing more than 100 years after its French counterpart, is the focus of this study. As noted above, the two versions of the tale of Melusine achieved varied levels of success in different countries. There are some differences between the two versions that are of particular interest to this discussion; notably, the intrinsic prologue only appears in *Melusine* (discussed in Chapter 1), while the Palatyne episode only appears in *Partenay* (discussed in Chapter 4). On the whole,

however, *Partenay* is less interesting in its detail, particularly in relation to Melusine herself. The evidence of an early printed edition also suggests that *Melusine* had more success in England in the early sixteenth century. *Melusine* is also the text that has attracted more scholarly attention. For these reasons *Melusine* is the focus of this study, with references to *Partenay* where relevant.

Interest in *Melusine* in recent years has been increasing; however, at this time there is still only a small body of work on this Middle English text. Differences in historical, geographical, political, and literary location lend unique emphases to the Middle English *Melusine*, which opens up substantial room for new interpretative work that is bound to come. This book contributes to that work.

NOTES

1. Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 60; originally published as *Sexes et Parentés* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1987).

2. A.K. Donald (ed.), *Melusine, Compiled (1382–1394 A.D.) by Jean d'Arras, Englisht About 1500* (London: Early English Text Society, 1895), cited throughout as *Melusine*.

3. Jacques Le Goff notes the distinction between a "tale" and a "legend" according to the Grimms's definition: the tale is more poetic, the legend more historical. When a tale is transposed into learned culture, when it becomes more specific socially, temporally, and geographically, even appropriated by a notable family, it begins to take on the characteristics of a legend. See Jacques Le Goff, "Melusina: Mother and Pioneer," in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 205–222, being a translation of Le Goff's portion of Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, "Mélusine maternelle et défricheuse," *Annales* 26 (1971), pp. 587–622, on p. 213. Given this definition, one might assume that *Melusine* is a legend. However, Le Goff himself retains a noncommittal stance, referring to "the legend (or myth) … the tale (or legend)" (p. 215). The term "tale" is, of course, associated with "folktale" but also with the oral feminine discourse of the "old wives' tale": a piecemeal but cumulative feminine wisdom, which has no authority outside its own sphere; a speaking among women, between and across the generations. This hint of otherworldly knowledge, of a distinctly feminine genealogy, seems appropriate to my reading of *Melusine*, as do the indeterminacy and the hint of illegitimacy

which the term "tale" gestures toward. In reference to *Melusine*, in this book, I therefore use the term "tale" throughout.

4. *Melusine* provides its own textual authorities as the "Cronykles" (p. 2, l. 16; p. 4, l. 3) and "Geruayse" (p. 4, l. 17 ff). These are offered as sources for tales of fairies who come into the house at night and helpfully do menial chores, and fairies who marry mortal men and bring them prosperity on condition of a private Saturday or a private childbed. In most of these cases upon the breaking of the covenant the wife turns into a serpent and disappears. In the tale of "Sir Robert du Chastel Roussel of the prouince of Asy" (p. 5, ll. 26–27) the husband must not see his wife naked, but he looks upon her in the bath, and she turns into a serpent and disappears. There has been a general consensus among critics that the sources of these tales are, in addition to Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperalia* (1209–1214), Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Naturale* (c.1250) and Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium* (1181–1193). It should be noted that, while in the sources the fairy wife is sometimes driven away by Christian rites, such as the "Lady of Esperver Castle" in the *Otia Imperialia*, this ominous sensibility is not reproduced in *Melusine*. These texts also contain other stories, which have parallels with other episodes in the tale of *Melusine*, such as the "large-toothed Henno." A surprising range of textual sources is proffered in Louis Stouff, *Essai sur Mélusine Roman du XIVᵉ Siècle par Jean d'Arras* (Dijon and Paris: Université de Dijon, Fascicule III, 1930), which considers possibilities from a diversity as broad as Aristotle and Marco Polo, pp. 43–71. For its textual sources *Partenay* refers to three unnamed texts: two Latin texts found in the tour of Mabregon and another text later found in the collection of Anthony, the earl of Slaz and Barry (p. 6, ll. 172–179). *Partenay* offers nothing in the way of analogues.

5. Le Goff provides us with a neat summary of the folkloric connections discussed in three nineteenth-century studies as follows. The "Melusina" legend is compared with: "(1) the Greek myths of Eros and Psyche and Zeus and Semele, and the Roman legend of Numa and Egeria, from European antiquity; (2) with several myths from ancient India, that of Urvashi being the oldest Aryan version; (3) with a whole series of myths and legends from a variety of cultures, from the Celts to the Amerindians" (Le Goff, "Melusina: Mother and Pioneer," p. 215). Le Goff also helpfully notes the folkloric classifications into which Stith Thompson places the Melusinian figure, which I summarize as follows. *Tabu*: "offending supernatural relative," and "looking at supernatural wife on certain occasion"; *Lamia*: "face of woman, body of serpent"; *Serpent damsel*; *Echidna*: "half-woman, half-serpent," "serpent with a human head," "mermaid marries man"; *Marvels*: "man marries fairy and takes her to his home"; *Witches*: "witch transforms herself into snake when she bathes" (Le Goff, "Melusina:

Mother and Pioneer," pp. 211–212). See Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1932–1936), 6 vols, and also, Anti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Academia Scientiarum Fennica (Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 184) 1961). Referring specifically to the French version of Jean d'Arras, in 1913 E.S. Hartland makes connections with tales from the British Isles, particularly Celtic legends from Wales and Ireland, and tales from the Shetland Islands, from Scandinavia and Iceland, particularly in "the same curious indecision between aerial and aqueous characteristics" (p. 192). However, his analysis is not limited to Celtic legend: "The cycle is in fact very widely diffused" (p. 193). He notes "the splendid story of 'Hasan of Bassorah' in the *Arabian Nights*" (p. 193), the Japanese legend of "Toyo-tama-hime," the daughter of the Sea-King, who requires privacy during childbirth (p. 196), and the Indian tale of "Urvashi" who, in her marriage negotiations, limits the number of conjugal visits (p. 197). E.S. Hartland, "The Romance of *Mélusine*," *Folklore* 24 (July 1913), pp. 187–200. See also Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Âge: Morgane et Mélusine: La naissance des fées* (Genève: Editions Slatkine, 1984), which includes textual and folkloric sources, including fairies from antiquity, and Claude Lecouteux, *Mélusine et le Chevalier au Cygne* (Paris: Payot, 1982), which concentrates upon medieval manifestations of the Melusinian figure.

6. Le Goff, "Melusina: Mother and Pioneer," p. 6.
7. Robert J. Nolan, "The origin of the Romance of Melusine: A New Interpretation," *Fabula* 15 (1974), pp. 192–201. Stephen G. Nichols, "Melusine Between Myth and History: Profile of a Female Demon," in *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 137–164.
8. Kristina Pérez, *The Myth of Morgan la Fey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
9. James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
10. Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Âge*, p. 434.
11. For two positive readings of Melusine's hybridity as discursive and narrative ambiguity see Sara Sturm-Maddox, "Crossed Destinies: Narrative Programs in the Roman de Mélusine," in *Melusine of Lusignan*, eds. Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 12–31; Kevin Brownlee, "Melusine's Hybrid Body and the Poetics of Metamorphosis," in *Melusine of Lusignan*, eds. Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 76–99.
12. Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), p. 2. For the monster as categorical crisis

see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), especially Chapter 3 "Monsters, Medians and Marvelous Mixtures: Hybrids and the Spirituality of Bernard of Clairvaux"; and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

13. Sylvia Huot, "Dangerous Embodiments: Froissart's Harton and Jean d'Arras's Melusine," *Speculum* 78 (2003), pp. 400–420, on p. 413.

14. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Maternity and Monstrosity: Reproductive Biology in the Roman de Mélusine," in *Melusine of Lusignan*, ed. Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 100–124; on p. 108.

15. Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 188–191.

16. Douglas Kelly, "The Domestication of the Marvelous in the Melusine Romances," in *Melusine of Lusignan*, eds. Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 32–47.

17. E. Jane Burns, "A Snake-Tailed Woman: Hybridity and Dynasty in the Roman de Mélusine," in *From Beasts to Souls: Gender and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, eds. E. Jane Burns and Peggy McCracken (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 185–220.

18. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 25.

19. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. J. H. S. Burleigh (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 169, as cited in Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 25.

20. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 25.

21. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 26.

22. A catalogue of monstrous creatures in the Middle Ages would include not only misshapen, deformed, and hybrid beings but also those of racial, religious, geographical, or indeed sexual difference. See Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (eds.), *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto and Buffalo: The University of Toronto Press, 2003) and Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity*, p. 87.

23. Most famously, perhaps, in Pseudo-Albertus Magnus's *De Secretis Mulierum*. See Helen Rodnite Lemay, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

24. Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity*, pp. 86–88.

25. Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity*, p. 6.

26. Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity*, p. 87.

27. Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity*, p. 6.

28. Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Do Unto Others* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 5.

29. An important anthology that presents a range of extracts of pertinent primary texts is Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). See also Emilie Amt (ed.), *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) and Carolyne Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

30. Kim Phillips argues that conduct and advisory texts for women were "attempts at engineering gender" rather than representations of existing social practice. Kim Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270–1540* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 92.

31. Judith Bennett has found that in 1363–1364 in East Riding of Yorkshire women worked in the harvest and were paid 71% of a man's wage. *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenges of Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 82 ff.

32. Sarah Rees Jones, "Public and Private Space and Gender in Medieval Europe," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 246–226, on p. 251.

33. In England, unlike in some European countries, widows were not enfranchised, nor were they involved in the social or ceremonial activities of the guild. This suggests that the community and networking benefits of membership were not available to them. Bennett, *History Matters*, p. 100.

34. Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 95–116.

35. Recent research has shown that the option of married women formally adopting *femme sole* status, and thereby achieved legal independence, was not as enabling as previously thought. Marjorie K. McIntosh, "The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300–1630," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005), pp. 410–438. See also Kathryn Reyerson, "Urban Economies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, eds. Bennett and Karras, pp. 295–310.

36. As Karras notes: "The husband was in charge and the wife was expected to obey him, but people would expect that he would not make demands that were excessive or repugnant to her, and that he would not disregard her needs." Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Do Unto Others* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 66.

37. Sara M. Butler, "Runaway Wives: Husband Desertion in Medieval England," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 2 (2006), pp. 337–359. See also Janet Senderowitz Loengard, "Legal History and the Medieval Englishwoman: A Fragmented View," *Law and History Review* 4 (1986), pp. 161–178.

38. Butler, "Runaway Wives," p. 342.

39. Butler, "Runaway Wives," p. 339.

40. See particularly Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies, or The Book of the Three Virtues*, trans. and intro. Sarah Lawson (London: Penguin, 1985).

41. The ideals of feminine passivity, obedience, and silence reached their peak in later centuries; they were particularly notable in the Early Modern period. Barbara Irene Kreps, "The Paradox of Women: The Legal Position of Early Modern Wives and Thomas Dekker's The Honest Whore," *ELH* 69, no. 1 (2002), pp. 83–102. Patricia Crawford, "Women and Property: Women as Property," *Parergon* 19, no. 1 (2002), pp. 151–171.

42. Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 187.

43. Geraldine Heng defines the practice of magic in women as "the operation of the feminine transacting its intentions without permission, deploying agents and instruments at will to devise acts of often superior force and efficacy to the mere efforts of armed chivalry." "A Map of Her Desire: Reading the Feminism in Arthurian Romance," in *Perceiving Other Worlds*, ed. Edwin Thumbo (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), pp. 254–255.

44. W.W. Skeat (ed.), *The Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen: Otherwise Known as The Tale of Melusine: Translated from the French of La Coudrette (About 1500–1520 A.D.)* (London: Early English Text Society, 1866), cited throughout as *Partenay*. Skeat identifies the handwriting of the Trinity College Manuscript R.3.17, the only extant manuscript of *Partenay*, as from the early sixteenth or possibly late fifteenth century. See *Partenay*, p. i. Donald offers no explanation for his decision to state on the title page of his edition that *Melusine* was "Englisht about 1500." Donald identifies his source as "the unique manuscript in the library of the British Museum," which is in fact British Museum Royal 18 B.ii. Nolan notes that the provenance of the manuscript before John, Lord Lumley (1534–1609), is unknown, but that "paleographic investigation" suggests a date of around 1500, which is supported by the watermark of the paper. See Robert Joseph Nolan, *An Introduction to the English Version of "Melusine": A Medieval Prose Romance* (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1971), pp. 18–19.

45. Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine. Roman du XIVᵉ siècle*, ed. Louis Stouff (Dijon: Publications de l'Université, 1932; repr. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1974), cited throughout as *d'Arras*.

46. Louis Stouff, *Essai sur Mélusine Roman du XIVᵉ Siècle par Jean d'Arras* (Dijon and Paris: Université de Dijon, Fascicule III, 1930), p. 90; see also Matthew Wayne Morris, *A Critical Edition of "Melusine," a Fourteenth-*

century Poem by Couldrette (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Georgia, 1977), pp. 23 ff.

47. Coudrette, *Le Roman de Mélusine ou Histoire de Lusignan par Coudrette*, ed. Eleanor Roach (Paris: Klinchsieck, 1982), cited throughout as *Coudrette*. This version was begun before and finished after the death of Guillaume de Parthenay in 1401. *Partenay*, p. vii.

48. See *Partenay*, ll. 120–154. The text names "Whilom of peiters/lord of partenay," ll. 121–122. See also Skeat's comments, *Partenay*, p. vii. Stouff presents a convincing argument that the production of *d'Arras* and *Coudrette* were politically motivated. See Stouff, *Essai sur Mélusine*, pp. 9 ff.

49. For detailed historical and political discussions on the French texts see Matthew Wayne Morris, "*The Romance of Melusine* and the Sacralization of Secular Power," *Postscript* 14 (1997), pp. 57–68; Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "Fiction and History: They Cypriot Episode in Jean d'Arras's *Mélusine*," in *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 185–200; Morris, *A Critical Edition*, pp. 11, 23–35; Nolan, *An Introduction*, pp. 87–105.

50. According to Harf-Lancner there are a total of ten known manuscripts extant of d'Arras's prose version in French. Harf-Lancner cites Stouff as her source but neglects to mention BN fr. 1485. Laurence Harf-Lancner, "La Serpente et le Sanglier," *Le Moyen Âge: Revue D'Historie det de Philologie* 101 (1995), p. 68. Eleanor Roach cites in total twenty one manuscripts and fragments of *Coudrette*. Roach, *Melusine*, pp. 77–86. Roach does not differentiate between illuminated and non-illuminated manuscripts.

51. Morris, *A Critical Edition*, pp. 31–35.

52. Roberta Kay Rigsby, *In Fourme of a Serpent fro the Nauel Dounward: The Literary Function of the Anima in "Melusine"* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1979), pp. 62–66. Skeat also notes the existence of an Icelandic manuscript fragment in the British Museum. Skeat, p. v.

53. The earliest owner on record for the *Melusine* manuscript (translation of *d'Arras*) is John, Lord Lumley (1534–1609). This manuscript (British Museum Royal 18 B ii.) subsequently became part of the foundational collection of the British Museum. Nolan, *An Introduction*, p. 18.

54. Nolan suggests that if the Bodleian is correct, then the printer was most likely de Worde. Nolan, *An Introduction*, p. 22. These fragments (Bodleian No. 5.Δ.285 (3)) parallel Donald's edition pp. 324 (l. 23) to 327 (l. 29), and 331 (l. 32) to 336 (l.1).

55. Helen Cooper, "Romance after 1400," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 698. For discussion of the eastern expansion in

the *d'Arras*, see E. Jane Burns, "Magical Politics from Poitou to Armenia: Mélusine, Jean de Berry, and the Eastern Mediterranean," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2013), pp. 275–301. See also Daisy Delogu, "Jean d'Arras Makes History: Political Legitimacy and the Roman de Mélusine," *Dalhousie French Studies* 80 (2007), pp. 15–28.

56. Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986). See also, W.R.J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London and New York: Longman, 1987); David Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

57. This is not to suggest that violence was not used by the barony as a means of coercion of the unarmed populace. See Richard Kaeuper, "The Societal Role of Chivalry in Romance: Northwestern Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 97–114.

58. See particularly Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 1–12.

59. Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 53–90.

60. Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 92–132.

61. Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 175–215.

An Epistemology of Wonder

There are many discourses at work in the tale of *Melusine*; historical, polit-
ical, and clerical discourses operate alongside the discourses of literature of
the imagination. It is the discourse of wonder, however, that takes center
stage, drawing the reader into the work from the opening paragraphs,
dominating the making of meaning in the text. All other discourses play
second fiddle to the discourse of wonder. Most notable is the treatment of
clerical discourse, which if left untended might suggest biblical readings of
Melusine's hybrid form, particularly her serpentine tail. Instead, religious
discourse is tackled head on, reworked and incorporated into the discourse
of wonder. Wonder is legitimized through an alignment with God and
His marvels; it is explicitly elevated above knowledge as merely human.
The result is an overarching epistemology that privileges Melusine's onto-
logical ambiguity not only as wondrous but also as "close to God," while
human knowledge is grounded firmly in the mundane. This chapter teases
out the construction of this epistemology through a close examination of
the taxonomy of being, outlined in the first paragraphs of the intrinsic pro-
logue, and a consideration of the episode of the Boar Hunt. No fairies or
other marvelous creatures are present in the Boar Hunt, and yet wonder
prevails over the apparent certainties of human knowledge. It is evident,
therefore, that the operation of wonder is not rarefied within the realm of
God's marvels; it spills over into the higher reaches of privileged human
knowledge. The Boar Hunt demonstrates that wonder precedes all other

ways of knowing, whether human or divine. This is the only certainty in the tale of *Melusine* and one ignores it at one's peril.

PROLOGUES, THE HABITUS, AND MAGICAL OBJECTS

There is a long rhetorical tradition that grants prologues significatory weight. Since classical times they have been used as a way to engage the reader through appeal and exhortation, even banter and innuendo.[1] These persuasive and attention-getting devices were often coupled with legitimating techniques such as reference to a person of high status, perhaps an *auctor* or illustrious patron. As part of the extrinsic prologue, these techniques focused outside the text; the intrinsic prologue, on the other hand, turned its attention inward, offering justification for and explanation of the text.[2] The intrinsic prologue might include a statement of the purpose of the text, an introduction to the subject matter, and a breakdown of content in an orderly and systematic manner. Consider, for example, the opening lines of "The Wife of Bath's Prologue":

> Experience, though noon auctoritee
> Were in this world, is right y-nough for me
> To speke of wo that is in mariage (ll. 1–3)[3]

These first words signal to the reader the key issues in the Prologue itself and the following Tale: traditional modes of knowledge production will be challenged, and the main topic under consideration will be gender relations within the married state. In the text that follows the Wife destroys books, a court of women tries a man for rape, and the overarching question throughout is "what do women want?" The answer to this question, in both the Prologue and the Tale, is the same, and it is found at the end of the first line of the Prologue: "auctoritee."[4]

The prologue builds a relationship between the text/narrator and the reader; it positions the reader in relation to the text, asserting legitimacy and authority for the narrator and establishing a particular mode of engagement with the text that follows. In his discussion of academic prologues, Alastair Minnis finds that the intrinsic prologue was designed "to lead" the reader into the text.[5] While the extrinsic prologue introduces the science or art that provides the context of production of the text, the intrinsic prologue describes the details of the process of the science or art as it is to be enacted upon a particular text. As such, the intrinsic prologue

can set an epistemological trajectory for the work, establishing frameworks of interpretation to guide the reader to the preferred reading.

While to the modern reader this approach might seem unduly structuralist or predictory, it does represent a certain medieval *habitus*. In his influential work *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, Erwin Panofsky proposed that, in the High Middle Ages, there existed a collective "mental habit" within the learned community, including "almost every mind engaged in cultural pursuits," that betrayed a passion for system and order.[6] This mental habit, honed in the treatises of Scholasticism (Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* being the exemplar) and disseminated through the schools and universities, had two "controlling principles" (30). Panofsky identified the core feature of the first, *manifestatio*, as "clarification for clarification's sake" (39). The second was *concordantia*: "the acceptance and ultimate reconciliation of contradictory possibilities" (64), particularly through dialectical reasoning. Panofsky found evidence of this mental habit in architecture, music, painting, and throughout cultural production. His connection between Scholasticism and Gothic architecture has attracted some criticism, particularly in art history circles;[7] but these criticisms are usually based upon a search for concrete evidence, from drawings or commentaries for example, that medieval architects used Scholastic models.[8] At a theoretical level Panofsky's work has proved less problematic, being taken up outside the discipline and developed into a semiology of space by Jesse Gellrich, and—most significantly for my argument—Panofsky's notion of the "mental habit" was integral to Pierre Bourdieu's articulation of the *habitus*.[9] For Bourdieu Panofsky's "mental habit" instantiates a higher level of cultural operation, in which cultural products become part of a system of meaning that reproduces itself through individuals with a high level of cultural literacy. The resultant products and the methods of composition can both be understood as "cultural symbols." Transmitted through formal education, Scholasticism was a mental habit that produced a collective unconscious, or subconscious, that self-replicated throughout learned medieval culture.

> To relate the works of a period with practices derived from a school of thought is to give oneself one of the means to explain not only what they *claim*, but also what they *betray* in so far as they partake of the symbolics of an epoch and a society. (Bourdieu, 230)

The *habitus* is, therefore, not necessarily consciously reproduced. The presence or absence of documented evidence of Scholastic procedures in

Gothic architecture is, therefore, less important than the identification of patterns in both the process and the product.

Bourdieu further elaborates upon Scholasticism as a cultural *habitus*, teasing out the role of the individual in this system. On the one hand, the cultural *habitus* is collective, necessarily manifesting itself in the individual. Individual creativity is thereby problematized to the extent that individuality and the community are codependent. On the other hand, Bourdieu argues that a "singular *habitus*" is still possible. This singular *habitus* is neither irreducibly individual nor a pre-determined cultural form but the result of a range of influences including education, the individual's social location coupled with the cultural meanings of their experiences, and personal attributes, culminating in a potentially unique life story. The singular *habitus* is the "unification and explanation of this set of apparently disparate conducts that constitute a life as one…a systematic biography."[10] The singular *habitus* remains circumscribed by the cultural *habitus*, but there is scope for difference within the community of individuals. My purpose here is to make explicit the *habitus* that guided the medieval reader into the text of *Melusine*: that singular *habitus* betrayed by the intrinsic prologue.

Of course the medieval *habitus*, both collective and individual, is not wholly described by the systems of order so valued by Scholasticism. As Bourdieu notes, such an approach would limit interpretation to the "methodological," the "formal," the "concrete," the "face value of the phenomena."[11] It must be acknowledged, for example, that the splendor of the Gothic cathedral, even if it is the superlative instantiation of the Scholastic medieval *habitus*, is also evidence of superior aesthetic sensibility and extraordinary building skill. Further, the play of light, soaring arches, multiple chapels, colonnades, and complex processional spaces are more than a reflection of design and artisanship: they are a display of enormous wealth and power. While we can only imagine how medieval audiences would have experienced these complex forces, at the very least they must have induced the affective responses of wonder and awe. For Roland Barthes, Gothic cathedrals were

> the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object.[12]

For Barthes, this "magical object" is "perfection." Outside genealogical history its passionate conception "transforms life into matter," infusing the

stone with chthonic residues. Simultaneously "a closure and a brilliance," it has an inward orientation that contains as it bedazzles. It is "a *silence* which belongs to the realm of fairy-tales": in other words, not a silence that is still, quiet, or at peace but one that is in almost fearful suspense, waiting to be filled, wanting to be satiated. The Gothic cathedral, in its intricate detail and fine tracery, in its magnificence, and verticality, has been carefully and deliberately built from the ground up (and up). For Barthes it has simultaneously "fallen from the sky." In this way the triumph of medieval system and order is overlaid with wonder.

The singular *habitus* of the intrinsic prologue of *Melusine* is similarly an imbrication of system and order with wonder. The taxonomy of being, introduced in the intrinsic prologue as a systematic approach to knowledge, contains an internal paradox that problematizes that very knowledge. The result is the development of an epistemology of wonder that overrides the certainty that systems apparently provide. The text thereby evidences a medieval *habitus* that had ample room to celebrate order and wonder simultaneously.

The Intrinsic Prologue of *Melusine*

Dauid the prophete saith, that the Iuggements and the punysshinges of god ben as abysmes without bottom & without ryuage. And he is not wyse that suche thinges supposeth to comprehende in his wit/ & weneth that the meruaylles that ben thrugh the vniuersal world, may nat be true, as it is said of the thinges that men calle ffayrees/ and as it is of many other thinges wherof we may not haue the knowleche of alle them. Now thenne the Creature ought nat therfore for to traueille, by outrageous presumyng to knowe & to comprehende in his wit & vnderstanding the Iugements of god/but men oughten/ thinkynge/to be meruaylled of hym/and meruaylling/to considere/how they may worthily & deuoutly prayse and glorify hym that Iugith so, and ordeynith suche thinges after hys plaisure & wille without eny gaynseying. (p. 2, l. 21–p. 3, l. 3)[13]

In this opening paragraph[14] four classes of being are presented: God, "Dauid the prophete," the "Creature" that is man, and "ffayrees." Reminiscent of a great chain of being, this apparently simple structure resonates with the Scholastic *habitus*, particularly in its finely tuned categorical delineations. Panofsky described three requirements for the *manifestatio* of Scholastic writing. The first was "totality": an attempt to approximate "one perfect and final solution…with everything in its place and that which no longer found

its place, suppressed" (44–45); the second, an "arrangement according to a system of homologous parts and parts of parts" (31), in which "uniform division and subdivision" (45) can be easily discerned and arranged in a "hierarchy of logical levels" (47); and the third, "distinctiveness and deductive cogency" (49–50), in which each individual element must "proclaim their identity by remaining clearly separated from each other" (50). The taxonomy found in the intrinsic prologue of *Melusine* comprises four categories that are homologous, hierarchically and proportionally arranged, and each category is distinct from the others, thereby presenting an easily recognizable system of order that the Scholastic *habitus* of the medieval mind would find comfortably familiar. The taxonomy presents an elegant progression of relations to time and space, forming a particular hierarchy of knowledge.

As noted above, the most obvious categorical property is that of being. God, prophets, "man,"[15] and fairies fall into three categories of being which are identified by their "nature." God is the divine: He is immediately at the head of any hierarchy, He is untouchable and in a category all His own. Fairies are one of God's marvels: they are the physical manifestation of God's wonder on earth, and their nature is marvelous. The prophet and man are both men. Prophets and men, however, are differentiated from one another even in this first paragraph. Prophets are mouthpieces of God, speaking His words to men, whereas men (should only) speak their own humble words of devotion to Him. A further distinction between learned and unlearned men is teased out in the second paragraph of the intrinsic prologue where the concept of the *auctor* is developed.

> As saynct paule seyth in thepistle that he made to the Rommains/sayeng in this manere/ that the things that he hath doon, shalbe knowen & seen by the Creatures of the world/that is to wete, by the men that can rede & adiousten feyth to þactoures whiche haue ben byfore vs/as to wete & knowe the landes, the prouinces & the straunge Countrees. (p. 3, ll. 8–15)

By aligning "feyth" with *auctores*, by collapsing together *auctores* and prophets within the Christian framework of the tale, the text implies that all special knowledge is a gift from God. The knowledge of the ancients, like Aristotle, or the knowledge of those who have seen the marvels of God in exotic far off lands is aligned with the revelatory knowledge of the prophets. What differentiates the *auctor* from the unlearned man is,

therefore, as expected, privileged knowledge. The text, therefore, makes a neat symmetry of two on each side of the worldly/otherworldly divide by making a proportional hierarchy thus:

<div align="center">

God
God's marvels

----

prophets and *auctores*
unlearned man

</div>

To determine whether the categories of God and His marvels can be organized in a way similar to prophets/*auctores* and the unlearned man it is helpful to examine their relations with space and time:

> the Iuggements and the punysshinges of god ben as abysmes without bottom & without ryuage (p. 2, ll. 21–23)

> as he is without ryuage & without bottom/soo are the thinges meruayllous & wounderfull in many dyuerse landes (p. 3, ll. 18–20)

Space is a key marker of categorical difference in the text. God, His punishments, and His marvels, are like abysses without bottom or edge. These abysses are without discernible boundaries: they have no surfaces and therefore are not contained or closed; they do not define a place. God has no shape whatsoever. He cannot be seen or determined except as open and without boundary. Some of His marvels, however, do manifest themselves physically: "somme called Gobelyns/the other ffayrees, and the other 'bonnes dames' or good ladyes" (p. 4, ll. 7–9). But these manifestations are only apparitions: "somme other fauntasyes appyeren…in lyknes of wymen with old face" (p. 4, ll. 18–20); "fayrees toke somtyme the fourme & the fygure of fayre & yonge wymen." Some are explicit shapeshifters: "tourned into serpentes" (p. 5, l. 8); "tourned in to a serpent" (p. 6, l. 1). God's marvels are spatially indeterminate. They are without fixed surfaces and remain open and subject to change. Man, on the other hand, occupies a closed and unchanging space. His surface is (relatively speaking) closed and unchanging, or changing only in a predictable way (through the processes of maturation and aging).

   In addition to different relations to space, different categorical relations to time also become evident.[16] At one extreme is God, who is beyond temporal existence. Fairies, as is made explicit in the episode of Melusine

and her mother Pressine, operate outside the constraints of human time. While they can participate in the human cycle of procreation (Pressine and Melusine both bear children to their human husbands), their rate of maturation, morbidity, and decay is unclear. We never hear of the decline of Pressine, and the longevity of her daughters is connected with the particular roles to which they are assigned. However, like humans, they are subject to God's final judgment. Prophets, and other *auctores*, also transcend human time at least in one respect. David the prophet, whose words have the greatest *auctoritas*, is dead, but he still exists in his words and his name, which are inscribed in Christian history. All *auctores*, whether Christian or pagan, transcend the annihilation that is death, at least to the degree that their names and the words attributed to them survive. Further, the older the *auctor*, the greater the *auctoritas* of the work attributed to him; the ancients were venerated to such a degree that they were believed to be, according to Richard of Bury (Bishop of Durham 1333–1345), more physically and mentally capable than the men of the day.[17] The unlearned man, who is subject to the transience of purely human temporality and mortality, is at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Space and time can indicate a relationship with knowledge. If the boundaries, surfaces, exteriors, or interiors of a space can be determined, then the space becomes definable to some degree and therefore similarly knowable. The contained and stable space is therefore more knowable than one which is continually changing through an unfamiliar and possibly indeterminate time. In this way, in terms of space and time, man is more knowable than God, who is without boundary or surface, or His marvels, whose spatial parameters may change through the smallest increments of time. This connection between knowledge and closure is explicated in the text in the first paragraph, where the only knowledge on offer to man is the knowledge of himself, of his own incapacity to know God. Man, as a subject of knowledge, is contained within his own category.

These relations to space, time, and knowledge form an incremental progression. The space of the unlearned man is closed and his time is strictly limited; the prophets have an extended temporality; the fairies have both an extended temporality and spatial indeterminacy; God is unbounded in space and infinite in time. The unlearned man is both knowable and unknowing (he is mistaken in his presumption to know God); the *auctor* is knowable (as a man) and knowing (of his limitations); the marvels of God are perceivable as momentary surface; God is inscrutable.[18] Therefore, in relation to space, time, and knowledge, the four

categories are arranged in a hierarchical, proportionate, and harmonious manner. Moreover, the occurrence of the same variables within each category has the effect of delineating structures which are morphologically equivalent (each being *has a relationship with* space, time, and knowledge) and therefore homologous.

Two interesting points can be drawn from the singular *habitus* delineated here. First, while the reader is implicitly positioned by the text as knowing and aware through the recognition of the systems of order at work in the opening taxonomy, they are at the same time explicitly positioned by that taxonomy as unknowing: "he is not wyse that suche thinges supposeth to comprehende in his wit" (p. 2, ll. 23–24). Further, they are admonished not to attempt to know: "the Creature ought nat therfore for to traueille," for such an attempt is "outrageous presumyng" (p. 2, ll. 29–30). Rather, they should accept God's marvels on earth: "the meruaylles that ben thrugh the vniuersal world" (p. 2, ll. 25–26), they should wonder at these marvels and at God Himself: "be meruaylled of hym" (p. 2, ll. 32–33), without questioning or "gaynseying" (p. 3, l. 3). The reader is therefore positioned to accept what is to come in the text: not to question, but to be "meruaylled." This somewhat paradoxical position emphasizes the privilege lent to the intrinsic prologue in positioning the reader in relation to the text and leading him or her into the text in a particular way from that location.

Second, while the unlearned man is at the bottom of the hierarchy, marvels and wonders are located next to God. The marvels and wonders in this text are associated with the fairy realm and the fairies and half fairies who cross from that world into this. The fairy realm in medieval romance is conventionally an otherworld that runs parallel to the real world, rather than in a hierarchal relation with it. In romance the fairy realm and its inhabitants tend to sustain a residue of ambiguity that is rarely resolved. Fairy creatures are not necessarily good or bad, indeed they can be unaccountably both in the course of one narrative. They often have special knowledge, including that of magic and divination, and they can move between that world and this, bringing their powers with them.[19] In the text of *Melusine* the eponymous heroine is such a figure: she is half fairy, raised in the otherworld of Avalon, and she has special knowledge and magical powers that are transportable into this world. The difference in this text is that the taxonomy presented in the intrinsic prologue explicitly privileges Melusine and the fairy otherworld from which she comes. Rather than being parallel in an otherworld, fairies are located above

humankind in a hierarchy of being. This is perhaps most startling when compared with more orthodox constructions of the great chain of being. In *Melusine* God's marvel and wonders, including fairies, are between God and humanity, and as such take the place of Angels in Aquinas, of celestial bodies (planets, stars, etc.) in Aristotle, or ideas and universals in Neoplatonism.[20] The link is the spiritual, the immaterial, the abstract, the unreachable, and untouchable; in other words, the unknowable. It is a significant elevation, shifting the fairy otherworld into a realm that is almost divine.

It would seem that this singular *habitus* sets up particular kind of epistemology, but rather than establishing a *different kind of relationship* with knowledge, this epistemology is based upon a relationship with a *different kind of knowledge*. The taxonomy developed in the intrinsic prologue, as outlined above, privileges learned knowledge only in the human realm below the line. Above the line, in the divine realm of God, wonder and the marvelous are privileged beyond knowledge (in its usual conception). Caroline Walker Bynum has identified a number of characteristics of medieval wonder, many of which strongly resonate with this text.[21] These characteristics position wonder as both a cognitive response and as an ontological category. Wonder is a response to facticity: only apparently real events and things can induce wonder. It is a response to the singular and the multiplicity of singularity, or diversity, in the world. It is also perspectival and nonappropriative. Wonder can be positioned as the first step to learned knowledge, but if wonder is not induced by "natural" causes, then it is not on the spectrum of learning. In this case wonder is ontologically different from learned knowledge and so is ultimately not accessible by human understanding.

The privileging of wonder in the intrinsic prologue is explicated through intertwining references to wonder with a variety of authoritative discourses, particularly emphasizing the discourse of truth. After the introduction of the taxonomy (p. 2), in the following two paragraphs further references to Aristotle, St Paul, and Adam are intermingled with other legitimating terms such as "science," "true" and "trew" (x2), "hystory" (x2), "true Cronykes," and "the playsure of god" (pp. 3–4). Embedded within this discourse of truth are references to "meruaylles" (p. 2, ll. 16, 28) and "thinges meruayllous & wounderfull" (20), lending these concepts a similar legitimacy. In other words, marvels and wonders are real things and events.[22] By extension, then, wonder is a response to real things in the real world, but it is not the same as knowledge, which

tends to contain within precise boundaries or definitions, or reveal with a full explication of intricacies. As outlined above, wonder can be imagined as spatially open in contrast to the closed space of knowledge and knowability. In this way, wonder can be understood as nonappropriative: it is an experience that remains unexplained; indeed, it is an acknowledgment of the inexplicable.

The privilege accorded to the experience of wonder is further developed through the alignment of travelers and travel writers with "þactoures":

> þactoures whiche haue ben byfore vs/as to wete & knowe the landes, the prouinces & the straunge Countrees. and to haue ouerseen & vysyted the dyuerse Royaumes/haue founde so many of dyuerse meruaylles aftir common exstimacion, that thumayn vnderstanding is constrayned of god/that soo as he is without ryuage & without bottom/soo are the thinges meruayllous & wounderfull in many dyuerse landes. aftir their dyuerse nature. (p. 3, ll. 13–21)

The knowledge of "þactoures" is positioned here as empirical and carries with it all the limitations of empirical knowledge. On the one hand, as this knowledge is gained through first-hand perception it thereby carries the legitimacy of the "eye-witness" account of primary evidence: they have "ouerseen & vysyted," "founde" distant countries and the marvels within them. On the other hand, these eye-witness accounts are necessarily individual, and as such they are constrained by personal perspective. This suggests that the *auctores* can only witness the wonders and the marvels but not interpret them in any meaningful way. Any knowledge they gain through such sightings is therefore not appropriative or explanatory. Diversity complicates this further: "Royaumes," "meruaylles," "landes," and "nature" are all "dyuerse." Any sense that the knowledge of the *auctores* could accumulate into some kind of universal truth is undercut by this multiplicity. Further, the reader is reminded that the marvels of God are as inexplicable to the human mind as is God Himself, and indeed the immediate purpose of the marvels is to demonstrate the vastness of God in contrast to the limitations of human understanding. Such a conception of space (multiple, diverse, vast) is in direct contrast with the spatial metaphors of stasis and containment that depict a limited human understanding ("constrayned of god"), which is emphasized yet further by the geographical (spatial) reality of medieval life in which most people could never hope to experience first-hand the wonders and marvels available to the traveler. In this way the *auctores* are differentiated from unlearned men not only

by their diverse experiences of the world but also by the acknowledgment that the singularity and subjectivity of their experiences creates a state of unknowingness in the face of a wondrous world.

So, while in some situations wonder could be simply a response to the unknown, and therefore the first step to knowledge, here we find that wonder and learned knowledge accord with Bynum's formulation that they are ontologically different. Wonder is a response to the wonders and marvels of God. These wonders are caused by God, whose motivations are beyond human understanding. Knowledge of God and His marvels is therefore beyond humankind. Simple human knowledge of the world, of the everyday, is not directly caused by God, and it is therefore possible to acquire this knowledge through learning. And yet, paradoxically, the more learned one becomes, the more aware one is of one's limitations, of what one cannot know.

Where does this leave the reader approaching the text of *Melusine*? It would seem that the unlearned man, or the reader in this scenario, is to be led into the wonders of the text through the intrinsic prologue, to be led into the text to experience wonder. The intrinsic prologue sets up an epistemology of wonder, privileging wonder and the wondrous, setting them not only above the knowledge of man but also as ontologically different from that knowledge and therefore unavailable to man's understanding. The text creates a sense that the reader is about to be exposed to wonder, and is being primed to make an appropriate response.

The singular *habitus* betrayed by the text is, therefore, a complicated interplay between a discourse of wonder on the one hand and taxonomies of system and order on the other. While at first glance these might suggest conflicting impulses, in the intrinsic prologue they are underpinned by the common notion of ontological difference. Indeed, the medieval *habitus* accommodated a number of currents and countercurrents (reconciling them as required through the second controlling principle of Scholasticism: *concordantia*). Alongside careful taxonomies of system and order was the notion that God was beyond any such humanly devised constraint. While this notion reached its logical conclusion in mysticism and the *via negativa*, it could also be understood as a question of language.

> The fact is that the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing. (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite)[23]

The difficulty for the text as an artifact of discourse is how to express something which is outside that discourse. Any system of representation has these limitations. A well-known example of this is Derrida's observation about the notion of infinity, in which "the positive plenitude of classical infinity is translated into language only by betraying itself in a negative word (in-finite)."[24] The infinite, characterized by transcendence, plenitude, beyond being, and ambiguity,[25] is necessarily relative to, even a derivative of, the finite. If infinity is used in an attempt to surpass totalizing thought, the concept itself draws one back to that which one is attempting to leave behind.[26] Levinas addresses this difficulty in *Otherwise than Being*:

> The correlation of the saying and the said, that is, the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic system and to ontology, is the price that manifestation demands.[27]

Within the terms of Levinas's schema, speaking of God is even more problematic:

> God is not simply "the first other," or "the other par excellence" or "the absolutely other," but other than the other, otherwise other, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other.[28]

The act of describing God comes perilously close to defining God, thus introducing closure to a concept which is supposed to be without limit. Despite their predilection for hierarchy, category, homology, totality, and closure, medieval thinkers did recognize the limitations of language and the logical conundrums it presented, even for God Himself.

> For if God does not define Himself, or if He could not define Himself, who would deny that ignorance and impotence are admitted into His Nature… On the other hand, if He both understands and defines *what* He Himself is, this will show that He is not altogether infinite since only by the creature can He not be defined…but by Himself He is both defined and known as to *what* He is. (John Scotus Eriugena)[29]

Medieval thinkers engaged in a range of linguistic gymnastics attempting to overcome these difficulties. Peter Abelard proposed that, when speaking about God, language undergoes a *translatio*: words do not bear their original meaning. He argued that logic and language operate within their own system. They are abstracted from real things and deficient in speaking

of God.[30] Similarly, Gilbert of Poitiers argued that when speaking of God, language is *usus loquendi*: used as "a way of speaking." Otherwise, strictly speaking, one can only say that "God is."[31] Thierry of Chartres said that "all words used of God are spoken metaphorically, otherwise they are not appropriate to God."[32]

For many medieval thinkers God could not be described, except in terms of approximation or contradiction. How could He then be portrayed in a way that is homologous to man as suggested in the taxonomy of the intrinsic prologue? One possibility to consider is that in the hierarchy of being delineated there is not in fact predicated on ontological sameness but rather on ontological difference. In other words, it is a hierarchy of *beings*; above the line separating God and His marvels from both the learned and unlearned man is profound alterity. A helpfully concise definition of alterity can be drawn from the work of Levinas:

- Alterity presents itself as *exteriority*; it manifests itself as separate from, and unforeseen by, the subject. It is what surprises, astonishes, fills the subject with wonder (or apprehension).
- Alterity is a site of *excess*, that is to say, an unabsorbed, indigestible residue, a force which the subject realizes that it cannot assimilate. In other words, an independence, a resistance or "viscosity" to the subject's aims and aspirations.
- Alterity is on a line to *infinity*. It exceeds all borders, boundaries, and constraints the subject wishes to impose on it. It is beyond any limit, insofar as this is understood by the subject, even though it may exhibit its own.
- Alterity is an *activity*, relative to which the subject remains passive. It initiates actions, brings about encounters, approaches the subject, makes demands, and relies upon the subject's responses, his responsibility.[33]

This delineation of alterity accords with the portrayal of God in the opening paragraph of *Melusine*. First, God and His creations, punishments and judgments are described in terms of "wonder" and the "marvelous."[34] God's marvels should be believed as God's wonder manifesting itself on earth. As such, they are *exterior* to the subject. Second, God and His marvels cannot be defined in terms which can be known by the human subject: "he is not wyse that suche thinges supposeth to comprehende in his wit" (p. 2, ll. 23–24). They cannot be drawn in, consumed, and

reorganized in reference to the self. They are *excess*. Third, God is defined in terms which transcend limit. His punishments, judgments, and marvels exist throughout the "vniuersal world" (p. 2, ll. 25–26): they can be anywhere. Further, as noted above, God and His marvels are described as spatially *infinite*: "soo as he is without ryuage and without bottom/ soo are the thinges meruayllous & wounderfull in many dyuerse landes" (p. 3, ll. 18–20). Finally, God has spoken and created "the meruaylles that ben thrugh the vniuersal world" (pp. 25–26), whereas the unlearned man "ought nat therfore for to traueille…to knowe & to comprehende" (p. 2, ll. 29–31), but should think about only "how they may worthily & deuoutly prayse and glorify hym…without eny gaynseying" (p. 2, l. 33–p. 3, l. 3). The subject is passive in the face of God's *activity*.

Keeping all these difficulties and possibilities of alterity in mind— Abelard's *translatio*; Gilbert's *usus loquendi*; Thierry's metaphor; and Levinas's exteriority, excess, infinity, and activity—it seems to me that the depiction of God in the intrinsic prologue is an attempt to position Him beyond man's conceptions of time, space, and knowledge: as alterity, or radical otherness. God is not definable in terms of the self but rather is irreducible to the self, indeed precedes the self ("vnderstanding is constrayed of god," p, 3, l. 18). If God and His marvels can only be defined in terms of difference, then the epistemology unfolding in the singular *habitus* of the text gives primacy to ontological difference over ontological sameness. The system of closed categories, hierarchically and harmoniously arranged, is not in fact homologous, as the collective *habitus* of *manifestatio* would lead us to expect. At its head is a category that is indescribable. Derrida says, "Perhaps Levinas calls us toward this unthinkable—impossible—unsayable beyond Being and the Logos (of tradition). But it *must not be possible either to think or to say* this call."[35] Nevertheless, could not the description of God found in the intrinsic prologue of the text be a gesture in that direction?

The text of *Melusine* is clearly a romance, and no doubt the medieval reader would approach it expecting a romance with all its concomitant motifs of wonder and the marvelous. However, within this particular context, the singular *habitus* of the text is informed by the wider learned *habitus* of the medieval period with its strong current of Scholasticism. This singular *habitus* reconciles the discourses of romance and the marvelous with Scholastic tendencies through the invocation of a discourse of wonder, indeed through an epistemology of alterity that will set in train certain preferred readings of the text. My purpose in this chapter is to

retrieve a pathway into the text as set out in the intrinsic prologue: a pathway that might not be evident at first glance to a modern reader but which a reader embedded within the medieval cultural *habitus* would recognize as the singular *habitus* of this particular text.

The Boar Hunt

To further demonstrate that the hierarchy of beings as described in the intrinsic prologue is predicated upon difference, I turn to the episode of the Boar Hunt in which wonder is given precedence over reason. Raimondin, the hero of our tale, is fostered as a youth to his uncle, Earl Emery, the Earl of Poitiers:

> Thistory thanne telleth to vs that this Erle was moche worthy & valyaunt a knight/and that loued euer noblesse, And was the most wyse in the science of Astronomye that was in hys dayes, ne byfore syn that Aristotles regned… And knowe ye that he loued so moche his neuew Raymondin that he might no more. and so dide the child his vncle, and peyned hym moche to playse & to serue hym at gree, and to doo hym playsir in all maners. (p. 20, ll. 7–18)

One day the court goes hunting for a wild boar, which has been sighted in the nearby Forest of Coulombiers. They discover the boar at last, there is a frantic chase, and finally the boar turns to confront his hunters. It is such a large and fearsome creature that no one is willing to dismount to attack it:

> Thenne camme the Erle that cryed with a highe voyce. sayeng. "shal this swyne abasshe us all." And whan Raymondyn herde thus spek hys vncle, he was in hymself vergoynouse and shamed/and alighted from his courser and sette feet on grounde. (p. 21, ll. 20–25)

The earl attacks the boar, which then lunges at him, forcing him to his knees. It then runs off into the forest. Raimondin chases it, and everyone loses sight of them both:

> Wherof the Erle, his vncle, was aferd/les that the bore shuld distroye hym. Wherfore the Erle waloped aftir hys neuew Raymondin and with a high voyce escryed hym. "Fayre neuew, leue this chasse, and cursed be he that anounced it to vs, For yf this swyne hurt you I shall neuer haue joye in my herte." But Raymondyn, whiche was chaffed, doubted not of hys lyf, ne toke heede to none euyl Fortune that might befall to hym therof. (p. 22, ll. 3–11)

Thus Raimondin and his uncle are separated from the others. Night falls, and they stop to rest. The earl looks into the sky, reads the stars, and begins to lament and weep for the future he sees. Meanwhile, Raimondin has lit a fire. Upon hearing his uncle's distress, Raimondin advises him that he is far too illustrious a personage "to enquyre of suche artes" (p. 23, ll. 31–32) as Astronomy, and in any case he should not fret about things he cannot change. The earl scoffs, and tells him what he sees:

> And the auenture is suche/that yf at the same ooure a subget dide slee hys lord he shuld becomme the moost mighty and moost worshiped that euer camme out of hys lynage or kynrede, And of hym shuld procede and yssue so subtle a lynee/that of it shuld be mencioun and remembraunce made vnto thende of the world. (p. 24, ll. 16–22)

What the earl does not tell Raimondin is the reason why he weeps and why he "gyue[s] nomore force" to the chase (p. 23, ll. 25–26). Raimondin does not notice the omission, and proceeds to argue with his uncle about the possibility of such a sequence of events. He protests that it is "ayenst al right and reason" to profit from mortal treason. The earl urges Raimondin to believe it nevertheless, and the argument continues until they hear a disturbance in the wood.

Each tries to protect the other from the charging boar. The earl, "that knew & wyst moche of the chasse" (p. 25, ll. 22–23) brings the boar down, but in the process falls to his knees. Raimondin rushes in to finish off the beast, but when in his youthful zeal he flings his sword at the boar's tough hide, the sword snaps in two and the point flies off into the darkness. Undeterred, he finally kills the boar with his spear. When he turns to find the earl he is overwhelmed with distress to discover that the broken point of his sword has mortally wounded his beloved uncle. He cannot believe that happiness or prosperity lie before him, only grief, dishonor, exile, and penance:

> And thanne Raymondyn camme to hys lord / and sore wepyng, kyssed hym with so heuy & wooful herte / that thenne he had nat mow say one only word for all the gold in the world /. And soone aftir that he had kyssed hym, he layed his foot on the sterop and lepe vpon his hors / and departed, holding his way thrugh the myddel of the Forest, moche dyscomforted, & rode apas vnknowing the way, ne whether he went / but only by hap & att auenture, And made suche a sorowe that there nys no personne in the world that coude thinke ne sey the v.th part of hys dolour /. (p. 27, ll. 1–11)

By this time the reader knows that the earl has spoken the truth, and the only question remaining is how the history comes to pass.

This episode presents *a prima facie* case for the elevation of wonder over reason in our developing epistemology. God does not answer to reason, reason does not make the leap from the human realm to the divine, and God as the other is inexplicable. A closer analysis is required, however, as the subtle intricacies of the interrelationships between reason, seeing, and knowing have implications throughout the text of *Melusine*, particularly in relation to the construction of possible positions for an epistemological subject.

The earl and Raimondin have two different ways of knowing. The earl's knowledge is based upon what he sees in the stars, on heavenly things, while Raimondin's is based upon his own definition of human reason. Raimondin has knowledge of human things—of social propriety, chivalry, and honor. He loves his uncle and "peyned hym moche to playse & to serue hym at gree, and to doo hym playsir in all maners" (p. 20, ll. 16–18), and when they go on the hunt Raimondin "rode euer byside" the earl (p. 21, ll. 5–6). All is right and proper. Moreover, he understands the pursuit of honor through displays of valor and hardiness. Indeed, he is the first to be inspired to exertion by his uncle's words, and his behavior is described in positive terms: "courageously," "hardy," and "valyaunt" (p. 21, ll. 26–30). He is, however, reckless in this pursuit. He will not desist from the chase when his uncle advises it (p. 21, ll. 4–12), even though his uncle is his lord, and also "knew & wyst moche of the chasse" (p. 25, ll. 22–23). Raimondin follows the boar fearlessly, but it is the fearlessness of apparently immortal youth. He never thinks of being killed: he "doubted not of hys lyf" (p. 22, l. 9). When Raimondin and the earl meet the boar, in his overblown confidence Raimondin urges the earl to hide in a tree "and lette me dele with hym" (p. 25, l. 5), but the earl, who understands the full extent of the danger, refuses and remains with Raimondin.

Being somewhat naive and idealistic, Raimondin cannot imagine that things are not always as they should be. When things turn out as they should not—when he accidentally kills his uncle and lord—he is thrown into not only overwhelming grief but also fear and confusion. For the first time he seems fully cognizant of the danger he is in, and ironically it is not from wild animals or enemies but from his own fellows. The laws of chivalry, which he believed would protect him, are now against him, but he still does not lose hold of his belief that things will be as they should be and that he should now be punished: "For in certayn all they that shall

here spek of this grett mysdede shal juge me/& with good right, to dey of a shamfull deth" (p. 26, ll. 15–17).

The earl's prophecy offers no comfort to Raimondin. Indeed, he dismisses privileged knowledge. He ridicules astronomy, and by implication other privileged knowledges, as superstition ("my lord, for godis loue lette that thing be. For it apparteyneth not to so highte a prince as ye be, For to putte of sette hys herte therto/ne for to enquyre of suche artes, ne of suche thynges," p. 23, ll. 29–32), even though it has already been positioned in the text as a gift from God, and therefore a heavenly thing ("and that I knowe by the high science of astronomye / of the whiche by thy grace þou hast lente to me oon braunche of knowlege whereof I oughte to preyse / to thanke and to regracy the hertily in thy highe mageste, wher to none may be compared," p. 23, ll. 3–8). While the death of his beloved uncle is perhaps precipitated by Raimondin's youthful recklessness, in his distress he believes that his is the worst crime ever committed: "For a more false ne more euyl treson dide neuer no synner" (p. 26, ll. 17–18). It is the worst thing he has experienced in his short life, and this defines the limit of his knowledge and understanding.

Earl Emery, on the other hand, is both a ruler and a learned man.[36] He is described as one of the most respected men of his time.

> Thistory thanne telleth to vs that this Erle was moche worthy & valyaunt a knight / and that loued euer noblesse, And was the most wyse in the science of Astronomye that was in hys dayes, ne byfore syn that Aristotles regned. That tyme that the Erle Emery regned / thistory sheweth to vs that [he] coude many a science, & specially he was parfytte in the science of Astromy, as I haue said tofore. (p. 20, ll. 7–14)[37]

Chivalry, *noblesse*, wisdom, and authority come together in the earl. And yet, despite these chivalrous and noble qualities, the earl's reign is not aligned with that of a great king or noble lord but with that of Aristotle, the ultimate pre-Christian *auctor*. The earl's reign therefore refers to his pre-eminent position as a learned man.

Aristotle, reason, seeing, and knowing have already been linked together in the intrinsic prologue:

> The creature of god that is raisonable, oughte moche besily to vnderstande aftir the sayeng of Aristote, that the þynges which he hath made & creatid here bynethe, by the presence þat they haue in themself, certyfyen to be

> suche as they are / As saynct paule seyth in thepistle that he made to the Rommains / sayeng in this manere / that the thinges that he hath doon, shalbe knowen & seen by the Creatures of the world. (p. 3, ll. 4–12)[38]

Aristotle is invoked to authorize the definition of the reasonable creature as he who accepts visible things as evidence of themselves. Presence can be determined without understanding, without "presumyng to knowe & to comprehende" (p. 2, ll. 30–31). Presence certifies things "to be such as they are"; all that can be determined is that they exist in the here and now. Moreover, if seeing and knowing are synonymous, then human knowledge is limited to the superficiality of surface. Indeed, to determine presence only the surface need be identified. Surface implies some kind of interiority, but if presence is evidence enough, then the interiority need not be penetrated, explored, consumed, reconstituted; it need not be completely knowable or known. The text presents reason as the acknowledgment of this limitation rather than a mechanism to override it. Reason is thus a necessary condition of knowledge, a prerequisite for it, but seeing is the vehicle through which this limited, human knowledge is gained.

Seeing is knowing, and as there are different kinds of beings, there are different kinds of seeing and different kinds of knowing. As outlined above, *auctores* are differentiated from the unlearned man by special knowledge. According to Boethius this means that they see differently:

> For there are certain definite stages and dimensions of advancement through which it is possible to rise and progress until the eye of the mind (that eye which, as Plato says, is far worthier of existence and preservation than all our organs of sensory perception, since only by its light may truth be sought or perceived)—until, I say, this eye, which has been submerged and blinded by our bodily senses, may be illumined once again by these disciplines.[39]

The disciplines to which Boethius refers in the above passage are the four disciplines of the quadrivium: geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music. These disciplines are based on the demonstrative method.[40] The demonstrative method is described in the *Posterior Analytics* of Aristotle as a method based upon "premises which must be true, primary, immediate and better known than, and prior to, the conclusion, which is further related to them as effect to cause."[41] The premises for all mathematical works, that is, for the quadrivium, are found in Euclid's *Elements*,[42] which itself is based upon axioms. Propositions within this system are proven

through experimentation and observation, and once propositions based upon the authoritative premises of one *auctor* are proven through experimentation by another *auctor*, repeat performances are considered redundant.[43] The disciplines of the trivium—rhetoric, grammar, and logic—are based on the rational method which uses plausible arguments rather than provable propositions. The rational method is not axiomatic, but rather based upon "opinion." William of Conches describes the demonstrative and rational methods, respectively, as discussing that which "is necessary, although not plausible," and that which "is plausible although it is not necessary."[44] Therefore, the demonstrative method requires highly developed skills of observation operating within the context of a specific and learned body of knowledge. The combination of this knowledge and these skills elevates the visual perception of the observer beyond the eye of the senses.

Knowledge of Christianity brings a further dimension to the construction of privileged knowledge. The premises required by the demonstrative method are like articles of faith. They are not able to be proven and through this very quality they are evidence of God:

> There are four kinds of *rationes* which lead man to the recognition of his creator—i.e. the proofs of arithmetic and music, geometry and astronomy. (Thierry of Chartres)[45]

Seeing with the eye of the mind is therefore a synthesis of the privileged knowledge of the quadrivium with the specialized skill of observation. These two things are cross-dependent in that the quadrivium "illuminates" the skill of observation, and yet the quadrivium requires observation in its methodology, that is, the demonstrative method. Indeed, the two become inseparable: knowledge, instead of being the object, becomes part of the process, and it is in the process where the distinction lies. Seeing with the eye of the mind becomes an engagement with the workings of the universe and the relative insignificance of the subject within it. Seeing with the eye of the senses is tainted with bodily desire. It is an engagement with the self, and the danger is that without an external reference the significance of the subject is disproportionately inflated.

The epistemology outlined in the first chapter of *Melusine* reflects the mechanisms of the demonstrative method: it invokes Aristotle, it presents reason as a prerequisite for knowledge but seeing as the mechanism through which to achieve it; indeed, seeing is knowing, and there is always

the inexplicable which should be accepted such as it is (observed). In the episode of Raimondin and the earl the conflict between them arises because they see differently.

The earl is learned in "many a science," but he is "most wyse" in astronomy. Choosing this discipline from the four of the quadrivium is strategic in the explication of the epistemology of the text. Unlike mathematics or geometry, astronomy deals with objects and distances beyond measure. While the movements of the planets might be described in musical terms, everything is unreachable, conjectural, and theorizable, but ultimately inexplicable. In Christian terms the mystery of the universe is such an enormity that it is evidence of the infinite wonder of God. Alan of Lille characterizes the study of astronomy as "bear[ing] witness to divine love at work in the heavens:"[46]

> by what reason the stars move, by what law a planet
> goes on a forward course, by what law it flees,
> retrograde, or lingers at a station of its journey,
> by what reason the Signs move on their oblique path. (Alan of Lille)[47]

The astronomy of the earl is clearly positioned as Christian. It is a gift from God—"by thy grace þou hast lente [it] to me"—and is presented in the text as revealing some kind of truth. It is not the *corpus astronomicum*[48] of the academy at that time but a Christian astrology which overdetermines the predictive qualities of astronomy by investing the stars with signs of divine predetermination.[49] Such an astronomy is well within the poetic conventions operating in the genre of chivalric romance. Chrétien, for example, acknowledges the special place of astronomy as the most wondrous of the quadrivium. He describes the coronation robe of Erec in the final scene of *Erec and Enide*:

> Quatre fees l'avoient fet
> Par grant san et par grant mestrie.
> L'une i portrest geometrie,…
> Et la seconde mist sa painne
> An arimetique portreire,…
> La tierce oevre fu de musique,…
> La quarte qui aprés ovra,
> A mout buene oevre recovra;
> Car la mellor des arz i mist.
> D'astronomie s'antremist
> Cele, qui fet tante mervoille,

Qui as estoiles se consoille,
Et a la lune et au soloil;
An autre leu ne prant consoil
De rien, qui a feire li soit.
Cil la consoillent bien a droit
De quanquë ele les requiert,
Et quanque fu et quanquë iert,
Li font certainnement savoir
Sanz mantir et sanz decevoir.[50]

[Four fairies had made it with great artistry and craft. One of them represented there Geometry…The second devoted herself to portraying Arithmetic…The third portrayal was of Music…The fourth, who next showed her handiwork, applied herself to an excellent design, for she represented the best of the arts. Her subject was Astronomy, who accomplishes so many marvels, consulting with the stars, moon and sun. Nowhere else does she get her inspiration for anything she has to do, and from them gains good, sound advice. All the information she seeks from them about whatever was or will be they reliably provide for her without lying or deceit.][51]

The robe, embroidered by fairies, displays the signs and symbols of the quadrivium. Each fairy except that of Music takes the capacity of her art to its ultimate logical conclusion. Geometry measures the "depth and height, length and breadth" of the sky, the earth, and the sea and "so measures the whole world." Arithmetic counts "time's days and hours, each single drop of the sea,…every grain of sand…all the stars in order" and the leaves in the woods. Astronomy is kept until last. The fourth fairy applies herself to "an excellent design": she applies herself to a task, a process, and yet whether that process is embroidery or astronomy, or both, is somewhat ambiguous. It is clear, however, that astronomy is the "best of the arts." It "accomplishes so many marvels," and it offers "inspiration" and "good, sound advice," all "without lying or deceit." While fairies are clearly outside the orthodoxy of the church, in this passage the fairies act as demonstrators of the wonders of God. They appear like marginalia, or like cherubs with trumpets blowing winds from the four corners of the *mappae mundi*. They are poetic figures which mobilize unexplainable wonders rather than literal representations of creatures supposed to exist.

When the earl engages his special knowledge of astronomy to read the stars, he does not see with the eye of the senses, which by definition is tainted by subjective bodily desires. In accordance with the words of David, which open the intrinsic prologue, the earl sees without trying

to explain or understand, without trying to rationalize. He sees without consumption and reconstruction. It is like a touching of surfaces without penetration or containment on either side. Unlike Raimondin he cannot deny or reinvent what he sees in the event that it does not suit him. Nevertheless, despite all this apparent disembodiment, what the earl sees is all too personal. He sees what he wishes not to see and is distressed by it. The earl has no control over the process. It is simply what happens and he must accept what he sees just as every other "raisonable" man should. He must accept the observations of his mind's eye in the same way as other men must accept the observations of their bodily eyes—observations should be accepted "such as they are." Privileged knowledge, like that of astronomy, is merely the tool to achieve a higher wisdom.

Raimondin, on the other hand, cannot see as his uncle does. He discounts his uncle's superior knowledge and skill on the basis that it is "ayenst al right and reason." Herein lies his error. Raimondin does not understand that the earl sees with the eye of the mind, and he does not have enough self-knowledge to realize that with no special knowledge to "illuminate" his gaze—neither of the quadrivium nor of worldly experience—he sees only with the eye of the senses. External information such as the earl's prophecy must be massaged to fit his youthful and idealistic understanding of the world:

> Thanne ansuerde Raymondyn that neuer he shuld mowe byleue that it were trouth / and that it were ayenst al right and reason / that a man shuld haue wele for to doo euyl, and for to doo suche a mortal treson. "Now byleue thou it surely," said the Erle to Raymondin, "For it is as I tell to the." "By my feith," said Raymondin / "yet shall I nat byleue it." (p. 24, ll. 23–30)

While Raimondin's doublet of "right and reason" echo Aristotle's "right reason," and thereby makes the Aristotlean connection of morality and rationality, he mistakenly connects them with truth ("that neuer he shuld mowe byleue that it were trouth") Truth, however, is located elsewhere. Aristotle locates truth in the metaphysical; Christian medieval thinkers locate it in the realm of the divine where reason does not hold sway. To paraphrase John of Salisbury and Peter of Poitiers, *scientia* (knowledge) is dependent upon reason and applied to human things, whereas *sapientia* (wisdom) is dependent upon the love of truth and applied to divine

things.[52] Raimondin's call to right and reason brings into sharp relief the limitations of his partial knowledge.

The human realm contains Raimondin, and he operates exclusively within it. The earl, however, reaches for the heavens and divine things. God and divine things are inexplicable. Those who think they know are trapped in their own realm. Like Raimondin they misapply the little knowledge they have because they do not recognize the limitations of their knowledge or of themselves. Those who know they do not know have achieved wisdom. Indeed, the only thing one can ever hope to know is the self. Everything else is other. When self-knowledge is coupled with privileged knowledge, for example of the quadrivium, the subject can see differently. And yet, their self-knowledge never allows them to lose touch with their own insignificance and incapacity. Their position as privileged knower is another wonder of God.

The episode of the Boar Hunt elucidates that the categories described in the burgeoning epistemology of the text are predicated on difference. Indeed, the categorical difference between the human and divine realms is such that it can only be described in terms of wonder and the marvelous, of that which can only be accepted, not understood. Given the limitations of language, it would seem that these descriptions are an attempt to indicate that which is beyond description. In the hierarchy of beings introduced in the intrinsic prologue, knowledge itself is problematized. As one advances in knowledge and gains access to privileged knowledge, one learns to accept the position of unknowing. It is wisdom to forgo the expectation of knowing.

These ruminations can be distilled into one main point: the hierarchy of beings, as constructed in the opening paragraphs of the text, is based upon a *manifestatio* of difference. This epistemology, this framework of clarification, urges the reader to push aside the expectations and assumptions of our accumulated knowledge. Whatever that knowledge may be, it is no longer applicable because what we are to read is a tale that was written in the stars, and even the most knowledgeable man since Aristotle could not explain it.

An Epistemology of Wonder

In these various ways the opening sections of the text of *Melusine* betray a singular *habitus* that is based upon an epistemology of wonder. The intrinsic prologue introduces a hierarchy of beings that is subtended by

system and order while at the same time predicated upon ontological difference. Ways of knowing are carefully teased out from knowledge itself, which is problematized as individual and perspectival. The episode of the Boar Hunt reinforces the limitations of man's reach in both conception and understanding. Wisdom, however, can be found in the release from knowledge, leaving only wonder as man's experience of radical alterity. Wonder is, therefore, a key element in this singular *habitus*—not only the wonder of an inexplicable God but also the wonder of wondrous beings that evidence His wonder on earth.

The implications of this elevation of wonder above the otherworldly line go yet further. It is not simply another celebration of God, nor is it simply a rhetorical move to strip the reader, as "unknowing man," of all knowledge in order to manufacture a wonder response. Bynum offers a further suggestion, proposing that the "wonder-reaction" was a "significance-reaction" (71). She argues that the wondrous and inexplicable were never "simply" wondrous and inexplicable. Rather, the wonder response itself indicated another layer of meaning: the wondrous "pointed" to a layer of wondrous meaning beyond, indicating a portent or message that was wondrous. In other words, the purpose of this epistemology of wonder is not simply to suspend disbelief; rather, it is to present the possibility of considering the wonders presented in the text as having another layer of meaning, as pointing to something more significant. The intrinsic prologue therefore seems to be setting up the reader to ponder alternative meanings and to be open to different possibilities.

The most significant wonder of the text is, of course, Melusine herself. And the significance of locating her—the eponymous heroine, the main protagonist—above the otherworldly line, is that it destabilizes medieval gender hierarchies before the main narrative even begins. The intrinsic prologue, that leads the reader into the text, opens up a whole range of challenges to medieval conceptions of women as those who must be knowable and known, who must be contained and controlled—and even as those who are lower in the hierarchy of being than men.

Woman as "other" to man was a mode of thinking that resonated strongly in the medieval imagination. This was not the other of ontological difference discussed above in relation to God; rather, it was the other as ontologically negative. Women as inferior to men was a social reality inscribed in authoritative medieval discourses, particularly of medicine and religion, and even enshrined in the law.[53] Medieval gender hierarchies aligned women with the negative side of binary oppositions; in other

words, the feminine was aligned with the negative side of positive masculine characteristics. Corinne Saunders has noted that the two biblical creation stories work in tandem to make women the "inverse" of man.[54] In the first creation story God creates both male and female on the sixth day, before the Fall (Genesis 1:27), thereby positioning gendered biological difference as "original" and "absolute."[55] In the second creation story Adam is created by God's hand alone whereas Eve is formed from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21–23). The second story thereby arranges the "absolute" biological difference of Adam and Eve in a gendered hierarchy. Moreover, this configuration of God—Adam—Eve means that "woman," as a concept or idea, is formed from the body of "man." Even *as an idea* she is aligned with the body, with materiality, with human matter. Her child-bearing role legitimates this connection. Man, on the other hand, is formed by God, giving him a superior spiritual connection and less grounding in the materiality of the body. Man is therefore associated with the spiritual and the rational. At the same time, man's proximity to God in the generative process makes him biologically superior to woman and legitimates her physical subjection to him.[56] In these ways not only is man superior to woman in an apparently linear hierarchy, but also woman is the inverse of man, manifesting a lack of his preferred characteristics (she lacks rationality, spirituality, and the mind; she has materiality and bodiliness); she also lacks his close connection to God.

These themes of women's lack were further articulated by authoritative discourses of natural philosophy, particularly those of Aristotle, which the text of *Melusine* itself invokes. Aristotle's form/matter dichotomy, representing the male/female roles in reproduction, was widely known and influential.[57] Within this model, the primary function of the female is procreation; indeed, this was believed to be the primary function of sexual difference, locating women firmly in the material realm. The male contribution to procreation, "form," is necessarily of a higher order than the contribution of the female, unformed "matter." Matter without form— without order—is disorder. Matter as female required external restraint; hence, the male form. Both are recognized as essential to reproduction, although the female is "an infertile male" and lacks "the principle of Soul."[58] Inadequate "setting" of matter leads to disorder, to imperfections of reproduction, and even monstrosity. A girl child represented a failure of matter to adequately "congeal."[59] Girl children were imperfections on the path to monstrosity. Such failures did not reflect a flaw or weakness in form, rather they indicated a resistance of matter to submit

to form, or an insufficiency or flaw in the matter itself.[60] Aristotle's form/matter dichotomy was therefore an instantiation of a hierarchy of power in gender relations. Moreover, it set in train a whole range of binarisms that further justified the power relationship predicated upon the gendering of order/disorder: reason/absence of reason (emotion), mind/absence of mind (body), sexual restraint/absence of sexual restraint (lust), and so on. The idealized feminine was not only a construct to legitimate these power structures; it did double service in reflecting back enhanced masculine qualities onto the idealized male, for example, her weakness contrasted flatteringly with his strength, her passivity with his activity, and her silence with his voice.

My point here is not to dwell on misogynist narratives but rather to show that in these discourses there was a tendency to define women by their "deprivation" of masculine qualities, rather than in their difference from them or even as having qualities of their own.[61] As Joan Cadden has observed, "the concepts of women as opposites or objects…were, in fact, commonplace elements of the scientific and cultural environment. So too were women's passivity, imperfection, and insatiability."[62] A striking example of women as "opposites" of ideal masculinity, rather than existing as beings in themselves, can be found in a series of Florentine legal cases of sodomy from the late fifteenth century. In at least half of these cases Michael Rocke finds that feminizing language and the abstract notion of "woman" seems to be on everyone's lips.[63] One might wonder why the notion of "woman" played so significant a role in a court full of men, making determinations about sex between men. What had women to do with the court process or the acts being tried? Flesh-and-blood women had nothing to do with the scenario at all, but the concept of "woman" was aligned with a particular sexual role. The worst thing about sodomy, it would seem, was the breach of gender roles; men who took the "passive" role in sex were "deviant" and "abominable" in their "sin against nature;" such a man "makes himself a woman."[64] It would seem that, in this case, the concept of "woman" was defined as a certain lack of appropriate masculine attributes and behaviors, without the need for any reference to flesh-and-blood women at all. As Cadden notes, "'woman' is in some sense the opposite or privative form of 'man.'"[65]

Even if this notion of "woman" as the absence or lack of masculine attributes is purely an abstraction, flesh-and-blood women become tainted; in this case they become the feminine "other" associated with a negative ontology. In the hierarchy of beings delineated in the intrinsic

prologue of *Melusine*, such a figure of "woman" (whether rhetorical or flesh-and-blood) would properly sit below the unknowing man, divided by an additional line of division between the self as the masculine subject and the feminine substrata that supports him through her own negation.

Medieval romance, particularly Middle English romance, negotiates with this tradition of idealized femininity, and the tale of *Melusine* presents a striking example.[66] As a feminine figure, Melusine is carefully crafted as "other." While in terms of social decorum Melusine presents as idealized femininity, her alterity goes far beyond any reference to Raimondin or his masculinity. Born of a fairy mother, she is half fairy and half human. Her "otherness" is always present in her cyclical bodily hybridity; interestingly, however, this physical mark of alterity is imposed by her mother who, despite a full fairy nature, bears no such mark herself. In other words, the bodily marker of hybridity is not naturally occurring, even for a fairy. It is instead a consequence of Melusine's earlier transgressive behavior that displeased her mother. Melusine, as a "bad daughter," is therefore, evidently, subject to her mother's discipline, rather than that of any masculine figure. Even upon her marriage, it is Melusine who sets the rules of engagement, based upon her mother's law. When these rules are finally broken, it is revealed that Melusine cannot escape Pressine's law, because it is God's will manifest. Further, Melusine's numerous claims throughout the text that she is "close to God" reinforce her direct connection with God, bypassing any masculine mediation through church, father, or husband. Melusine is, therefore, a different kind of "other." She is not defined negatively against the masculine, nor is she subject to his discipline or an agent of his will. Rather, she is ontologically different, a point foregrounded by her location above the line in the taxonomy of the intrinsic prologue. Moreover, identifying Melusine as one of God's marvels imbues her placement above the line with divine intention.

The epistemology of wonder goes further than foregrounding the ontological difference of fairy creatures in romance. In the text of *Melusine* wonder is imbricated with the feminine. The epistemological process outlined early in the text offers the reader an alternative approach to the process of "othering" that necessarily implicates the othering of the feminine. The text, therefore, puts into play an alternative perspective on feminine ontology, and thereby creates a productive tension between the stereotypical feminine space of ontological negation and the possibility of ontological difference. Ontological difference, in this view, can therefore operate as nothing less than, indeed nothing more than, a marker of sexual

difference. The following chapters will engage directly with these tensions, drawing out narrative threads that impact significantly on the potential for feminine agency and subjecthood. The next chapter considers the implications of this alternative perspective, focusing on a core element of romance narratives: the love relation.

Notes

1. For a general discussion of the development of the prologue as a form through the medieval period see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), and Tony Davenport, *Medieval Narrative: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
2. While the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic prologues is largely medieval, it is based upon Cicero's *Topica*. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 30.
3. *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd ed.), ed. F. N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
4. Precisely what constitutes "auctoritee" is never fully clarified.
5. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 30.
6. Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1957).
7. For example, Erik Inglis argues that it is based on twentieth-century spatial metaphors producing anachronistic analogies. "Gothic Architecture and a Scholastic: Jean de Jandun's 'Tractatus de laudibus Parisius,'" *Gesta* 42 (2003), pp. 63–85.
8. Commonly the search was for "the path that leads from the cell of the Scholastic philosophers to the mason's yard" (Heinrich Wolfflin, cited by Paul Binski, "Working by Words Alone: The Architect, Scholasticism and Rhetoric in Thirteenth-century France," in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 20). Here Binski argues for such a direct link, focusing on the development of *concordantia* between Scholasticism and the architect.
9. Jesse Gellrich, in *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology and Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), identifies the *manifestatio* of Scholasticism as the high point in a long historical trajectory of the semiology (and sacrality) of space. See also Pierre Bourdieu, "Postface to Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*" and Bruce Holsinger, "Indigeneity: Panofsky, Bourdieu, and the Archaeology of the *Habitus*," in *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making*

of Theory, ed. Bruce Holsinger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

10. 10.Bourdieu "Postface," p. 240.

11. Bourdieu "Postface," pp. 222–223.

12. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 88.

13. Sara Sturm-Maddox notes the reference to Psalms 35 and 91 in "Crossed Destinies: Narrative Programs in the *Roman de Mélusine*," in *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, p. 29 (see Introd., n. 7). She also makes the point that David is referring only to the human order, not that of a fairy marvelous; that "this recourse to Scripture is subtly bent to the purposes of Jean's own project" (p. 13).

14. References are to the paragraphs in Donald.

15. I have kept the term "man" in this taxonomy because my argument locates the feminine in this tale elsewhere.

16. Time is introduced in the extrinsic prologue and repeatedly appears in the intrinsic prologue where the word "history" is mentioned seven times in one and a half pages in Donald's edition: "Thystorye saith" (recounteth, certyffyeth, telleth), "In this part recounteth thystory," "Now saith thystorye," Page 1, ll. 11, 14, 18, 25, page 2, ll. 1, 2, 10. Indeed the whole *raison d'être* of the text is as a history, to give the legitimacy of historical precedence to the passing of the lordship of Lusignan to Jean Duc of Berry, the patron of the original French version.

17. As cited in Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 12.

18. This arrangement echoes another learned medieval *habitus*, John Scotus Eriugena's division of nature into four "species": not created and creating, created and creating, created and not creating, not created and not creating. *Periphyseon*, bk I, in *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy*, eds. Richard N. Bosley and Martin Tweedale (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 1997), p. 602.

19. Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 179–180. Also see Michelle Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance from Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000).

20. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), particularly Lectures 2 and 3, pp. 24–98. See also Edward P. Mahoney, "Lovejoy and the Hierarchy of Being," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), pp. 211–240; Joseph G. Defilippo "Aristotle's Identification of the Prime Mover as God," *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series 44 (1994), pp. 393–409; John Marenbon and D.E. Luscombe, "Two Medieval Ideas: Eternity and Hierarchy," in *The Cambridge*

Companion to Medieval Philosophy, ed. A. S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 51–72.

21. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), particularly Chapter 1: "Wonder," pp. 37–76.

22. Bynum, "Metamorphosis and Identity," p. 54.

23. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, "The Mystical Theology," in *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy*, eds. Bosley and Tweedale, p. 600.

24. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 114.

25. For a discussion of the complexity of the notion of infinity see Robert Bernasconi, "The Silent Anarchic World of the Evil Genius," in *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum*, eds. J. Sallis, G. Moneta and J. Taminiaux (Dordrecht, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), pp. 257–272.

26. See Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," pp. 126–128.

27. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), p. 6. Originally published as *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

28. Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), pp. 113–115, as cited by John Llewelyn, "Am I Obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal)," in *Re-Reading Levinas*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 239.

29. John Scotus Eriugena, "*Periphyseon*, bk III," in *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy*, eds. Bosley and Tweedale, p. 619.

30. David Luscombe, *Medieval Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 51, and D.E. Luscombe, "Peter Abelard," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 293 ff.

31. John Marenbon, "Gilbert of Poitiers," in *Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Dronke, p. 337.

32. *Abbreviatio Monacensis Contra Eutychen*, III 49f, ed. N. Häring (1971), p 463, as cited in Peter Dronke, "Thierry of Chartres," in *Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Dronke, pp. 358–385, on p. 365.

33. Elizabeth Grosz, "The 'People of the Book': Representation and Alterity in Emmanuel Levinas," *Art & Text* 26 (1987), p. 34.

34. In the first two paragraphs of the text—"meruaylles" (p. 2, l. 25; p. 3, l. 28), "meruaylled" (p. 2, l. 32), "meruaylling" (p. 2, l. 33), "dyuerse meruaylles" (p. 3, ll. 16–17), "meruayllous & wounderfull" (p. 3, l. 20)—all in relation to the judgments, punishments, or pleasures of God.

35. Derrida, as cited by Robert Bernasconi, "The Trace of Levinas in Derrida," in *Derrida and Differance*, eds. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Coventry: Parousia Press, 1985), p. 22.

36. Sturm-Maddox notes that the earl is "an exemplary reader of God's wonders," but her argument takes another direction. "Crossed Destinies," p. 16.

37. In Jean d'Arras' French version of 1393, Emery has access to more privileged knowledge. He is the grandfather of St. Guillaume, and has knowledge of rhetoric, music, physics, geometry, philosophy, and theology (p. 16). In *Coudrette*'s French version of the early fifteenth century (ll. 145–166) and the later Middle English *Partenay* (circa. 1500), the introduction to the earl is more detailed and more extensive than in *Melusine*:

> Hit is so in trouth in time auncion,
> After the time that Octauian was,
> In peyters a erle had of grete renoun,
> Off whom gret talkyng men held hie and bas;
> louid of all, cherished in eche place,
> Called Amerys; wel cowde aftronemie,
> And A man ful ripe in other clerigie
>
> Off the right Canoun and Ciuile also;
> Wel nye al by hert thes science coude he,
> Als wordly witte I-now had ther-to;
> yut hys dedes neuerthelesse to se,
> Neuer better astronomian might be,
> Founde was neuer man being christian;
> He cowde moche more than any other man,
>
> But only he which sterres gan to name,
> Then all other, with ther names all.
> A gret man this was And of noble fame,
> And wel at ease of goodes mondaill;
> Disport of houndes loued moche with-all,
> Full ofte chaced he hertes, bores grete;
> Thys erle of peyters huge nobles gan gete. (*Partenay*, p. 8, ll. 1–21)

38. D'Arras' version reads somewhat differently: "La creature de Dieu raisonnable doit entendre, selon que dit Aristote, que des choses invisibles, selon la distinction des choses qu'il a faictes ça jus, et que par leur presence de leur estre et nature le certifie, si comme saint Pol le dit en l'epistre aux Rommains, que les choses qu'il a faictes seront veues et sceues par la creature du monde," Jean d'Arras, p. 2.

39. *De institutione arithmetica*, ed. Gottfried Friedlein (Leipzig, 1867), pp. 9–10, as cited in Winthrop Wetherbee, "Philosophy, Cosmology and

the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," in *Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Dronke, p. 30.

40. See Charles Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," in *Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Dronke, p. 155.

41. *Posterior Analytics* 12, 71B20-21, trans. G.R.G. Mure in *The Works of Aristotle*, *vol. 1*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford, 1928) cited by Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," p. 155. John of Salisbury (d. 1180) is the first European scholar to show first-hand knowledge of this work in his *Metalogicon* (Burnett).

42. Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," p. 159.

43. Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," p. 153. The notion of *auctoritas* thus becomes self-reinforcing.

44. William of Conches as cited by Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," p. 154.

45. N.M. Häring, *Commentaries on Boethuis by Thierry of Chartres and His School* (Toronto, 1971), p. 568, as cited by Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," p. 151.

46. Dronke, "Theirry of Chartres," in *Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Dronke, p. 382.

47. *Anticlaudianus*, ed. R. Bossuat (Paris, 1955), III 426–429, IV 36–39, cited in Dronke, "Thierry of Chartres," p. 382.

48. Astronomy was one of the four disciplines that made up the quadrivium, one of the seven liberal arts of Latin scholarship, which in its rejuvenated form was the backbone of medieval formal education. By the end of the twelfth century astronomy was a body of knowledge which had assimilated classical Latin works as well as texts translated from the eastern tradition; Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Abu Ma'shar were all translated and circulated. By the end of the thirteenth century scholars had access to a *corpus astronomicum* which demonstrated a largely standardized astronomical curriculum in the universities. By this time astronomy had developed beyond the astronomical table, which presented techniques of calculation, into a theorizing discourse. Nevertheless, observation necessarily remained the basis for conceiving of and demonstrating the validity of propositions. See Stephen C. McCluskey, *Astronomies and Cultures in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 189–192.

49. Indeed, it was within the realm of Christian orthodoxy that the heavens were interpreted as signs (but not causes). This tended to be limited to things such as comets or eclipses as signs of death. See McCluskey, p. 145.

50. Wendelin Foerster (ed.), *Kristian von Troyes: Erec und Enide* (Halle: Verlag von Hax Niemeyer, 1934), p. ll. 6744–6790.

51. *Erec and Enide*. D.D.R. Owen (ed. and trans.), *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1987), p. 89.

52. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* IV 13, ed. C.C.J. Webb, pp. 178–179, and Peter of Poitiers, *Sententiae* 4, ed. N.M. Häring, *Die Swettler Summe* (Münster, 1977), p. 25, as cited by Burnett, "Scientific Speculations," p. 152, n. 5.

53. There is substantial literature in this field. Recent important works include Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras, *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Emilie Amt (ed.), *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe*: *A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Helen M. Jewell, *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe 1200–1500* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).

54. Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 24–25.

55. Pierre J. Payer, *The Bridling of Desire: Views of Sex in the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 21, cited in Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 25.

56. Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 25.

57. For relevant textual extracts see Alcuin Blamires (ed.), *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

58. Aristotle, "The Generation of Animals," in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, ed. Blamires, p. 40.

59. "Compare the coagulation of milk. Here, the milk is the body, and the fig-juice or the rennet contains the principle which causes it to set." From Aristotle, "The Generation of Animals," in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, ed. Blamires, p. 40.

60. The resistance of matter is linked to "'disobedience' to the male formative principle," potentially threatening social order, and insufficiency is linked to it suspicious connection with menstrual blood. Joan Cadden, *Nothing Natural is Shameful: Sodomy and Science in Late Medieval Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 123.

61. Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 27.

62. Cadden, *Nothing Natural is Shameful*, p. 114.

63. Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 106–109, cited in Cadden, *Nothing Natural is Shameful*, p. 108.

64. Cadden, *Nothing Natural is Shameful*, p. 108.

65. Cadden, *Nothing Natural is Shameful*, pp. 108, 111.

66. As will be further discussed in Chapter 2 below.

Wonder and Love

Medieval wonder is, at least in one of its forms, a recognition of ontological difference. Wonder represents an irreducibility to the self that is the mark of alterity and therefore allows for difference. The surprise that results from wonder is also suggestive of something more significant, something beyond the simple moment. It points to other kinds of meaning and the potential for a different kind of opening into the future.

As a nonappropriative approach to alterity, wonder is, in many theorizations, a movement that fuels the energy of desire. One of its potentials, then, is to open a space-time for a new kind of love relation. This kind of love relation is not easy to achieve. While medieval romance offered hitherto unseen scope for the potential to develop agency in its female figures, there were also a number of constraining factors. In this literature the expression of feminine desire is a tricky thing, as I discuss further below. In order to avoid misogynist constructions of insatiability, this desire must be carefully circumscribed. Feminine agency too must be judiciously employed in order to avoid allegations of willfulness and excessive pride. Some romances do not take the risk, instead going down the path of the passively accepting heroine. In other romances heroines desire, actively woo, speak out, and exhibit their individuality in a number of ways. Often, however, wooing maidens conform to a narrative of normalization that consumes wonder, and agentive wives are ultimately subject to the whims of their husbands. Melusine and Raimondin succeed in a different kind of love relation, but is it her fairy nature that makes the difference?

Corinne Saunders notes that the fairy otherworld offers a space to explore wishes and desires that are forbidden in the human world, its amorality allowing such explorations without the negative judgment that would necessarily flow within human contexts.[1] In the case of the fairy mistress, for Saunders and also for James Wade, the underlying assumption is that the hero's wishes and desires are explored and that the fairy simply serves a masculine wish-fulfillment function.[2] Geraldine Heng approaches magical women somewhat differently. Heng reads fairies and magical women as powerful autonomous subjects. She posits that the magical or fairy nature of these women sanitizes what would otherwise be unacceptable or unthinkable feminine agency. Cast as other, their agency is safely quarantined in an otherworld that is often offstage, elsewhere from the action depicted in the text.[3] If we take Heng's argument seriously, then the fairy mistress is not simply a trope for the exploration of masculine desire; instead, her actions, motivations, and desires offer the potential to reflect upon an otherwise unthinkable feminine agency and desire. If feminine desire is recuperated from the otherworld in this way, then the ontological difference of the fairy becomes a marker of sexual difference in the heroine of romance. If Melusine is read in this way, then her relationship with Raimondin can be reintegrated into a discussion of love relations in Middle English romance. In this chapter I position the fairy marvelous as a strategic progression in the ongoing negotiation of feminine agency within the romance tradition. This means that the relationship of Melusine and Raimondin can be located within the literary genealogy of agentive women in Middle English romance.

It is well recognized that romance provides a space for narrative development that presents challenges to idealizations of feminine stasis and passivity, certainly more so than do substantially shorter forms such as the courtly love lyric. Even in the "calumniated wife" stories, while the heroine maintains her passivity as a matter of policy, she is jostled, moved about, exiled, placed in rudderless boats, set adrift, and so on.[4] In other words, she is constantly in motion as an integral part of the narrative. Heng argues that while the courtly love lyric is the most "relentlessly androcentric" of chivalric forms in which the feminine is effaced from the text, romance presents a potential for other possibilities in its "weave of gender relations."[5] Simon Gaunt suggests that the level of idealization of the feminine often found in the courtly lyric is difficult to sustain in romance, with its wider sweep of context in both space and time; while the lyric constructs the stasis of only a moment, romance must "face the

consequences."[6] Similarly, Roberta Krueger takes the view that romance often betrays a narratorial anxiety about the response of the female audience to courtly sexual politics. Krueger cites instances where the narrator goes as far as to interject into the narrative to explicitly distance the audience (Krueger's narrative audience) from the feminine figures within the romance.[7] Helen Cooper goes further, arguing that the distance narrative opens up between the poet and the subject was actively exploited by early writers of romance to privilege the feminine voice.[8]

One such early feminine voice can be heard in the twelfth-century *Roman d'Eneas*, the last fifth of which is focalized through the desiring Lavinia. This is in striking contrast to Virgil's account in the Aeneid, which gives only a glimpse of Lavinia's interiority.[9] Chrétien's romances also feature valorized feminine figures who offer alternative behavioral modes. For example, in the largely post-nuptial romance *Erec and Enide*, the married Enide is anything but silent,[10] and in *Yvain*, the lady-in-waiting Lunete can develop elaborate machinations to bring the hero and heroine together.[11]

By the fourteenth century, in Middle English romance ideals of *fin amor* have given way to "mutuality and *trouthe*" as key elements in love relations, and feminine agency is represented more strongly than in either its French or Anglo-Norman predecessors.[12] For example, the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn* retains some elements of the French tradition in its detail, length, and form, while the Middle English *King Horn*, only one hundred years later, is considerably shorter and has little descriptive detail.[13] Moreover, *King Horn* is more emotionally charged than the Anglo-Norman version, particularly in the figure of the heroine Rymenhild. Rymenhild's wooing is more sensual and the consummation of her relationship with the hero is explicit, while Rigmel in the *Romance of Horn* argues for the respectability of her love.[14] Rymenhild is described as beginning to "wexe wild" on a number of occasions,[15] and her vocal protestations to her forced marriage contrast sharply with Rigmel's passivity.[16] That being said, the notions of courtly love and the ideals of courtly femininity are not unproblematically worked into the Anglo-Norman text. While Rigmel, initially determined, seems to dissipate in a lack of resistance to her apparent fate, and while she might be less sensuous than her Middle English counterpart, she is still a woman who chooses and pursues her man.[17]

Even more striking is Malory's revision of the measure of Guenevere's love for Lancelot. While Chrétien, in twelfth-century France, allows

Guenevere love, hers is not comparable to Lancelot's: "if he was very dear to her, his love for her was a hundred thousand times as great."[18] Malory, three hundred years later in England, makes no such distinction between the love of Guenevere and that of Lancelot, nor between that of men and women in general. In his famous discourse on love, in the opening of "The Knight of the Cart" episode, Malory valorizes "old love" and offers Guenevere as an exemplar:

> But the olde love was nat so. For men and women coude love togydirs seven yerys, and no lycoures lustis was betwyxte them, and than was love trouthe and faythefulnes. And so in lyke wyse was used such love in kynge Arthurs dayes.…
>
> And therefore all ye that be lovers, calle unto youre remembraunce the monethe of May, lyke as ded quene Gwenyver, for whom I make here a lytyll mencion, that whyle she lyved she was a trew lover, and therefor she had a good ende.[19]

For Malory, then, Guenevere is a practitioner of "old love," and such love is characterized by truth and faithfulness; it is not lustful, and it also assumes an equality of participation between men and women in the love relation.

These Middle English texts, and many others, are infused with feminine desire, but what kind of desire is it, and where does it lead? In the romances where women woo, their desire focuses on that one issue: the choice of a spouse. For Melusine the choice of spouse is of paramount importance; indeed, she approaches her marriage through a series of stages, each of which incrementally tests Raimondin's *trouthe*. For a medieval heiress marriage was, of course, an event of great moment and long-lasting significance in her life. To have carriage of, or even input into, such a decision was perhaps the greatest agency for which a woman could ever hope. Given that agency in the choice of husband is a high point, it does not necessarily follow that marriage reduces a woman to a cipher of her husband's will. Feminine wisdom and foresight, coupled with evident capacity, need not be diminished by marriage, but the presumption of marital accord rests heavily upon wifely acquiescence, suggesting that wifely agency should move in accord with a husband's will. Such accord, while considered to be ideal, is nevertheless complicated by a number of factors, not the least being an awareness that the husband is fallible, and that his will can be misdirected or even apparently absent.

Some husbands are explicitly cruel, some are badly advised, and others are simply disinterested or inadequate in some other way. In such cases wifely agency, or even enforced curtailment of it, can create a tension that problematizes masculine authority.

The interesting question, then, is not to ask simply about the agency of the young and beautiful maiden but rather to consider how this agency translates through marriage, particularly for those married women whose views differ from their husbands, or even for those women, like Melusine, who have concerns that extend beyond their husband and children. How do the concomitant tensions play out? What kind of desire is left for them?

The Problem with Love

These marriages—mandatory for saving the one or the other, the one and the other, in corporeal or genealogical destiny, living form or name—always remain *conditional.* No doubt, they perform a symbolic and social function. They procreate children, construct castles, cultivate the earth, build cities. All the same, love…is always star-crossed. Neither flesh, nor spirit, nor body, nor name are allied, generated, regenerated, allowed to flourish.

<div align="right">Luce Irigaray[20]</div>

Desire has been theorized within the history of philosophy as invoking the economy of the interval. Elizabeth Grosz describes two trajectories within this history.[21] The first is the Plato, Hegel, Freud, and Lacan tradition, which, despite its internal variations, has the common theme of lack. It is a desire which can never be satisfied, but in its attempts to do so consumes a series of (apparently) desired objects which, upon the dissatisfaction consequent to their consumption and incorporation, are recognized as inadequate substitutes (for the elusive "true" object of desire), and the search continues. In this configuration desire can be equated with the interval: that space between the subject and the object of the subject's desire. When the subject has achieved the object, when the interval has been consumed, so has the desire for that particular object, such desire being then replaced by dissatisfaction and the desire for another.[22] In this form of desire there is only one subject. As noted in the previous chapter, alterity is characterized by a separateness that sustains wonder. It is a site of excess, a residue that remains indigestible, resisting assimilation. If the interval is not sustained, no separateness exists, no alterity or difference remains. In this configuration of desire, wonder does not survive.

Any "happily ever after" narrative risks invoking this form of desire. Many medieval romances conform to this teleology, including romances with agentive heroines. By definition, "happily ever after" narratives end on some point of resolution. In medieval romance this resolution usually includes the restoration of harmony and order, including normalization of any aberrant feminine behaviors, such as quietening excessive activity and taming excessive desire.

In many romances heroines are resourceful, determined, and sometimes unscrupulous in their amorous pursuits. They can also be educated and highly accomplished, often more so than the menfolk: they can sing, play the harp, play chess, are skilled in the healing and magical arts, and can often read.[23] As noted above, Rymenhild in *King Horn* is one such heroine. An aggressive wooer, she summons Horn to her chamber. Her messenger, however, is concerned about Rymenhild's motives, and decides to take Horn's brother in disguise instead. Not recognizing the imposter, Rymenhild attempts to seduce Athulf, and is understandably furious when she discovers the deception. Rymenhild has a fiery temper, she is determined, and also procedurally skilled; she maneuvers Horn's knighthood to elevate him to a more suitable rank to be her suitor, without revealing her interest to her father the king.[24] Another feisty heroine is Josian in *Bevis of Hamptoun*. Josian, as an exotic *bele Sarracine*, is less constrained than most Christian heroines and allows herself surprising scope in her modes of behavior. She waits on, woos, and heatedly pursues Bevis. Her advances are rebuffed until she fully disrobes and accosts him in his chamber, where an agreement to marriage is reached on condition that she convert to Christianity. Such a promise does not subdue her, and her spirited agency is to all intents and purposes free from the constraints usually associated with Christianity and courtliness.[25]

While insight and wisdom may be given to women, their learning rarely gives them lasting agency or autonomy. They might be able to combine learning with resourcefulness to gain their point, but ultimately they are still subject to the whims of men, even if those men are shown to be lesser in reason, wisdom, and knowledge.[26] Despite their skillful machinations, Rymenhild and Josian are both married off against their will while their heroes are in exile. They must turn their skills to fending off unwanted sexual advances, and they are reduced to the passivity of waiting to be rescued from their entrapment. When Horn and Bevis come to the rescue they require reassurance that their lovers have remained faithful to them, and imaginative chastity tests emerge. This requirement of chastity is a test

of loyalty and *trouthe*, but it does have a tendency to operate only one way. In this way the energies of the women become concentrated on the needs of their men rather than their own.[27]

Another telling example of a narrative of normalizing feminine excess is *Ipomadon*. While desiring women feature in this late Middle English tail-rhyme romance (ca. 1375) and their experiences of love are recounted through numerous bedtime soliloquies, their desires are repeatedly mocked and their agency undercut by Ipomadon's manipulative disguises. This strategy escalates until "The Fere" and all the women in the kingdom believe themselves exposed to the threat of sexual slavery in a pagan land. While the Middle English romance might not carry the full misogynistic weight of the earlier Anglo-Norman version, the narrative of decline in feminine agency runs parallel to the hero's rise in chivalric honor as his superior prowess is repeatedly proven.[28]

The patterns within the above examples suggest that feminine activity is often countenanced in romance narratives if it entails the pursuit of a suitable hero, even though he might not be recognized as suitable at first. Such activity, even if transgressive, is usually motivated by sexual desire. It is not a desire run amok but a desire to promote the hero to be what he should (desire to) be:[29] Rymenhild's desire manifests itself explicitly in her machinations to elevate Horn to knighthood, and The Fere's tournament implicitly challenges Ipomadon to elevate himself. In each of these cases, as the knight's worth is gradually revealed, the narrative comes to a point where the tables have turned and the lady must now strive to be worthy of *him*. Through the progress of the narrative, her desire for him is transformed into a desire to be desired by him. This fits closely with Lacan's desire that has been described as "a fundamental lack, a hole in being that can be satisfied only by one 'thing'—another('s) desire. Each self-conscious subject desires the desire of the other as its object."[30] The circularity of this definition ensures that desire is sustained by the potential of delayed gratification. The satisfaction of such desire is forever deferred: always, at any point, unattainable. *Bevis* plays this circularity out; as the narrative cycles over the trope of Josian's chastity, it is repeatedly threatened, defended, and proven.

As feminine desire becomes a mirror of normalized masculine desire, separateness collapses and no wonder remains. Rymenhild and The Fere initially show agency in both choice and action, but once the prowess and the nobility of their heroes have been revealed, they become constrained in action and subject to the choice of their lovers. Josiane retains

her agency after marriage—she is even capable of murder—but her actions are focused entirely upon sustaining her chastity, so she is ever worthy of Bevis.[31] While these romance heroines enjoy space to express their desires and to initiate action, excessive female agency and desire has a tendency to conform to a narrative of normalization in which wonder is lost. In *King Horn* and *Ipomadon* this agency finally dissipates within the confines of suitably configured marriages.[32] Marriage is positioned as a high point in these narratives. The masculine trajectory—the search for identity and worth—is concluded with a suitable marriage that positions the hero in his rightful place in the social order. For both husband and wife this is the "happily ever after" moment, in which his identity and social location is secured and her one desire realized—closed off, done. In *Bevis* the "happily ever after" moment, almost grasped, is snatched away in the endless cycle that is Lacan's fundamental lack.

The second trajectory of desire Grosz identifies through the work of Spinoza, Nietzsche, and, more contemporaneously, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard, and others.[33] In this configuration desire exists *within* the interval. The interval is a necessary condition for desire in that it provides the space within which the movement that is desire can take place: "It is the force of positive production—the energy that produces things, that constructs alignments with and interactions between things… that assemble[s] and join[s], separate[s] rather than incorporate[s]."[34] Instead of being the interval itself, this conception of desire is the change in the interval. Levinas's interpretation of lack, as an endless cycle of consumption of the interval, is reduced to what he calls "need." His formulation of desire, on the other hand, "does not coincide with an unsatisfied need; it is situated beyond satisfaction and nonsatisfaction."[35] Need thoroughly consumes, and thereby negates, the alterity of the other, whereas "metaphysical desire tends toward *something else entirely*, toward the *absolutely other*."[36] In other words, for Levinas the absolutely other is beyond assimilation, and desire tends toward this absolutely other. Such a desire is different: it sustains wonder.

This kind of alterity can be found in some agentive wives of Middle English romance. These women operate as separate agents, behaving in surprising ways, exhibiting resistance, breaking through constraints, and approaching the masculine subject with demands. Further, different kinds of feminine desire become apparent: desires that are not focused on the husband alone but instead go beyond him as the idealized limit that would constrain appropriate feminine desire. These sources of surprise and wonder

contribute to an alterity that has the potential to rework and make different the relation between husband and wife. The husbands in these examples, however, often disallow this difference. This demonstrates not only the limits of feminine agency, but at the same time highlights flaws in masculine authority. In this way these tales demonstrate the limits of Levinas's configuration of alterity, in which the other brings about encounters with the subject but must rely upon the subject's responses, his responsibility, for any changes to occur.

The Middle English romance *Athelston* offers a pertinent example. There are two key women in this text: the queen and the king's sister. Both are active, almost to the point of indecorousness. They both move from the private space to the public with unhesitating sureness of step.[37] When a letter arrives from the king inviting his sister Dame Edyff and her husband to London to see their sons knighted, the earl claims that his wife is not available as she is "gret with chylde" and "may nou3t out off chaumbyr wyn" (ll. 218–220). When Dame Edyff hears the invitation, however, she states "I wil nuy3t lette tyl I þere be" twice for good measure (ll. 228, 230).[38] Dame Edyff will not be cloistered by convention. She is an independent agent who moves around—from private to public space, from country to city—as she chooses. She and her husband proceed to London immediately, only to be imprisoned on arrival. While Dame Edyff does not physically resist arrest, in front of her jailers she takes her challenge to her brother the king: she calls out to him "Why wole þe vs sloo? / What haue we a3ens þow done?" (ll. 246–247).

The queen is similarly determined and unconstrained. Within two lines of hearing of Dame Edyff and her husband's imprisonment, she has moved from her bower to the hall. In that public space she begs a boon from the king for her pregnancy, asking that his sister's family be tried in open parliament rather than executed without a hearing. The king's response is to swear "be hym þat weres þe corowne off þorn" that they will be executed the following day "3yff I be kyng off lande" (ll. 270–272). Undeterred, the queen's negotiation strategy shifts to affective display. The heavily pregnant queen breaks out in abundant tears and falls on her knees "and prayde 3it for hem alle" (l. 278). Such an open challenge is not only breaking through the constraints of decorum, it is expressing a desire that goes beyond the king as the center of her private domestic world.[39] This intercessory action expresses a desire that is outward looking, that has moved without hesitation into the space of public debate.[40] In this surprising exhibition of agency and independent desire the queen asserts

a wondrous alterity. Yet, rather than taking on the responsibility of such alterity, as Levinas anticipates, the king experiences it as a threat to which he responds with violence. With one infamous kick the king reduces the queen to the gravest of physical states short of actual death: the travail of stillbirth.

While these two women show many similarities in circumstance and experience—they are both of high rank; they are active, outspoken, and pregnant; and their babies are, it seems, interchangeable—there are significant differences in their relationships with the king. Early in the tale Dame Edyff is positioned as a favored counselor of the king, habitually in his presence (ll. 75–80). Indeed, it is jealousy of this relationship that sets the events of the story in train. When Dame Edyff is carried off to prison, crying out to the king, he is distressed: "In herte he was ful woo" (l. 252). In Levinas's terms, when the king hears Dame Edyff's plea, he looks alterity in the face, acknowledging his responsibility to its difference. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the queen is a favored advisor; indeed, the queen herself admits to her lack of influence: "He wole doo more for hym, I wene, /þanne for me, þou3 I be qwene," she says (ll. 306–307). Nor does the king suffer any regret in assaulting her so grievously. The queen's miscarriage results in the king losing his heir, but he shows no sign of remorse, conveniently replacing his wife's child with his sister's. This amply repays Dame Edyff for her suffering, and the brother and sister are reconciled. The queen, however, disappears from the text at line 332. It would seem, then, from the king's point of view that difference can be tolerated in a sister but not in a wife.

In romance, spousal abuse usually succeeds in stamping out any residue of alterity. Most abused heroines remain loyal and suffer in silence without recourse.[41] Helen Cooper finds the motif of the "women on trial" sufficiently common to classify it as a "meme" of Middle English romance.[42] The falsely accused heroine is usually thrown into prison without trial and threatened with either execution or exile. The meme focuses around the debate of women's goodness or wickedness, and chastity and patience were key markers of feminine virtue. It follows that for the heroines to be unmistakably good, they conform to type. In *Athelston* there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with this model of goodness. The women *are* good, but they also speak in defense of themselves and others. In Levinas's view, their attempt to maintain alterity in the face of the subject brings the critique home to the king and his inappropriate enactment of masculine authority, carefully articulated in the words of both his sister

and his wife. The potential remains for alterity to resurface, and for Levinas's desire to be reinvigorated.

Within Luce Irigaray's formulation of desire, however, no such potential would remain. Irigaray's desire engages with both of the traditions delineated by Grosz, having as its point of departure the configurations of both Levinas and Lacan. For Irigaray, desire is both the interval and the change within it:

> *Desire* occupies or designates the place of the *interval*....Desire demands a sense of attraction: a change in the interval, the displacement of the subject or of the object in their relations of nearness or distance.[43]

And it is more. It is not the movement of one toward the stationary other (or the other toward the stationary one). It requires not only a movement *between* two but the movement *of* two. Further, the movement of each must in itself be a two-way movement: "establishing a chiasmus or a double loop in which each can go toward the other and come back to itself."[44] This is a more complicated understanding of desire, and certainly it is more demanding of a medieval text as it requires an acknowledgment of two equivalent subjects operating in concert. *The Erle of Tolous* offers an example. This is ostensibly a tale of masculine self-interest, breeding both conceit and inconstancy, brought into striking contrast with forthright feminine good. The emperor is aggressively acquisitive, reducing his land to civil war; he is boastful, resting his excessive claims on his status as a "trewe knyght"; and he is ready to think the worst of his wife. His wife, on the other hand, is the steadying voice of right throughout the tale. While she does not break through to the public space as the women do in *Athelston*, she speaks repeatedly with frankness and clarity of purpose to a string of men—all of whom disappoint—including her husband. There are, however, three moments in the tale that offer an alternative future, in which the relationship between husband and wife is not based on his goodwill but rather on a relationship of equivalence and difference.

The main narrative is one of betrayal and counter-betrayal, with Dame Beulybon (the empress) relentless giving her advice to the emperor,[45] repeating three times that he should desist from his campaign against the erle as it is not in a rightful cause. The text leaves no room for doubt that the emperor's exercise of authority is flawed, offering as a narratorial gloss "That false quarell cometh to evell ende, /For oght that may betyde" (ll. 131–132). Men who serve the emperor are even more directly involved

in intrigue, lying, and cheating in complicated games of cross and double-cross. In each case, Dame Beulybon admonishes them and they promise to desist, but of course they do not. Her agency, it seems, is limited to verbal critique. She is the good conscience that these men lack, but she has no forceful agency. Moreover, as their words have no value, these men impute little value to the lady's truthfulness. Her chamberlains are afraid that she will break her word and expose them, claiming that "Womans tonge ys evell to trysts" (l. 676), and yet they prove the reverse to be true as she keeps her word but they do not. Similarly, the emperor's lament for his wife's apparent fickleness exposes his own:

> Y wende for all thy worldys gode
> That sche wolde not have turned hur mode -
> My yoye begynnyth to kele. (ll. 862–864)

Ironically, it is he who loves his wife one minute but loses this love the next, while she remains loyal. Constancy is a marker of virtue in this tale. Good men do not vacillate and are prepared to speak unequivocally. The old man in the parliament, the merchant, and the abbot all disbelieve the accusations against Dame Beulybon, basing their confidence on years of character knowledge: "Ther was nevyr man, sekurly,/That be hur founde any velany" (ll. 883–884). Their constancy draws attention to the emperor's fickleness. Further, the erle is the only person, other than the bishop who hears her confession, who thinks of asking Dame Beulybon herself if the claims against her are true. Unlike all the other recipients of her good advice, he believes her words and acts upon them. The erle is the true "trewe knyght," set in direct contrast with the emperor, who claims to be a "trewe knyght" early in the tale but cannot measure up even to his own standard.

The relationship between Dame Beulybon and the erle is different from the beginning. Sir Trylabas has promised the erle that he can arrange for the erle to see Dame Beulybon, who is famed for her beauty. The erle dresses as a hermit and goes to mass to see the lady. She knows that he has come to see her, but he does not know that she is aware of this plan. The scene in the chapel can be read through Irigaray's formulation of desire as setting parameters for a potential amorous exchange.

In Irigaray's formulation, there are two key points to consider in the chiasmic movement that is the amorous exchange: the maintenance of the two as separate desiring subjects, and that which is between the two.

The first thing to note about the meeting of the erle and Dame Beulybon is that they meet on neutral ground, in a chapel. They have moved toward each other, deliberately with the purpose to meet, leaving their own places behind—their own "proper" places to which they will later return. The lady has come to "be seen" but the deliberateness of her actions undermines any sense that she is being reduced to an object of the gaze. She arrives, stops, and then turns her face to the erle for some moments:

> Sche stode stylle in that place,
> And schewed opynly hur face. (ll. 334–335)

They are face-to-face, each facing the other. This is not a modest gesture, but is open and confident. She is not simply an object to be viewed but a subject looking out. Her open face is an offering to meet on equal terms. Interestingly, the erle looks on from the oriel rather than a dark corner, suggesting that he, too, is quite visible to her. If we can imagine, then, that they are looking at each other, a series of effects comes into play.

In Levinas' configuration, the face-to-face relation describes a unique moment in which two subjects face one another, differently. Each is in a different position, necessarily facing in a different direction; each maintains his or her uniqueness within this relation. As one meets the other's gaze, one meets a need found in the face of the other. This acknowledges the other as existing prior to the subject, as different, as *other*. Further, the subject is actualized in its response to the other. It is a model of unquestioning non-reciprocity; there is no keeping of account.[46] For Irigaray, the face-to-face relation helps to describe the meeting of two desiring subjects, a meeting in which the boundaries of the self are crossed. The "precise" and "dry" solidity of the "outline" or "exterior" becomes a moist fluidity where boundaries are "indistinct."[47] This movement, opening, flow, produces an energy that is a product of the two but separate from each one, separating each from the other. For Irigaray this energy is a spiritual third, a pleasure neither can claim as his or her own but each can experience through the other, the other becoming the transcendental for the one. And yet this spiritual third, simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically, is within one, within that part of the one which is shared with the other. In this way the third term, the work (of the two), or their energy (combined), is that which emerges as the product *between* the two.[48] As the erle looks at Dame Beulybon and she looks straight back, for those moments a face-to-face relation is described, boundaries are crossed, an energy is produced, within which lies the potential for a different kind of love relation.

This potential is further developed in the next movements of the lady:

Twyes sche turnyd hur abowte,
    …
    For the erle schulde hur see. (ll. 346–348)

This movement succeeds in a double achievement. First, she stakes out a claim in relation to the erle. Turning, she shows all sides of herself to him, apparently hiding nothing. She reveals more to him than is strictly necessary to satisfy the terms of his agreement with Syr Trylabas, but in so doing she appropriates control of the moment. She moves with freedom, life, and autonomy, breaking through the potential stasis associated with a viewed object. In this way her movement asserts for a second time that she is meeting him not as an offering, or a pretty view, but on the basis of equality. In fulfilling the need of the erle to see her, she has not allowed herself to be cowed or reduced in any way. On the contrary, she has marked out a claim for subjecthood without saying a word.

Second, she stakes a claim to maintain her separation from him (or anyone else for that matter). Within Irigaray's chiasmus, the two-way movement of each, it is necessary to ensure for each a return to the self, and most importantly a return "to *herself* as the place where something positive can be elaborated."[49] To maintain the separateness of the two subjects of desire each must have her or his own "proper place" to come back to: that part of the self which remains untapped, which is not offered for consummation or assimilation within the work, that part of the self which remains unknown to others. While the erle and Dame Beulybon each have their own places elsewhere from this scene of the encounter, the lady nevertheless proceeds to carve out such a space right there, as though to emphasize its existence and her autonomy within it. Twice she turns, spinning about herself. This movement defines a space: not a space between, as the face-to-face encounter describes, but rather a space around herself, around her own axis. She is the center. Her movement creates a boundary, a closing of the space about her that had been open a moment before with the exchange of the gaze. All that can be seen is the exterior surface of this space, within which there is an active agent whose interiority is not available. This unassimilated part of the self can only be maintained by the agency of the self. It is the place of autonomy, the place of renewal of the self by the self. This place not only provides a resource for the self as a

subject but is also the source of wonder, making possible the newness of each encounter. Wonder is a key notion in Irigaray's conception of alterity. It is "the first of all the passions."[50]

Just before the lady leaves the church, in a desperate attempt to obtain a keepsake or memento, the erle throws himself at her feet begging alms (remembering that he is dressed as a hermit, and he does not realize that she knows who he is). She gives him forty florins, but among the gold she has concealed a ring that she has slipped off her finger. The ring is given freely with no expected return. It marks a momentary outpouring, an excess of feeling that cannot be expressed between two people who must appear as strangers. Irigaray urges us to think of movement rather than stasis; movement twice over: "a changing dynamic;"[51] movement across space and time. This dynamism presents us with another facet of desire: that which, at any moment and in any place, is between desire, what was desire, and what might be desire, in other times and spaces: "*between* what has already been identified and what has still to be identified, and so on."[52] These spatial and temporal movements create not only energy (the work that is the third term) but also a "remainder" that is not contained momentarily in the third term: that excess of energy of the one or the other overspilling into a spatiotemporal future. The ring exists within such a changing dynamic. Dame Beulybon gives the ring as a secret token of goodwill, but the erle does not see it at first. Instead, he discovers the ring at a later time, after he has returned to his rooms. Already the meaning of the ring is destabilized. It was a token of goodwill, but now the erle treasures it as a keepsake, and still more for the potential it holds to change, at some future time, into a love token. Their relationship, established through the face-to-face exchange and the energy of the third term created there, through her claim of autonomy and agency in the delineation of the private place, now comes to the moment of potential future, overspilling with the excess of the remainder. The gift of the ring has created an opening forward in space and time.

The relationship between Dame Beulybon and the erle begins on a footing of carefully crafted equivalence that is sustained by an acknowledgment of difference. It is a difference that always challenges the accumulated knowledge of the other within the self, which the self brings to each encounter. The acceptance of the potential for surprise in each encounter is also an acceptance of change, or process, in the other and in the self. Movement in the self, becoming what one can be, results from experiencing the wonder of the other: "*Who art thou? I am and I become*

thanks to this question."[53] This wonder, the potential for surprise, is suggested in the final lines of the tale, in which Dame Beulybon and the erle are finally married and live "wyth yoye and myrthe" (l. 1208) for another twenty-three years (and have fifteen children). The reward for maintaining the separateness of two desiring subjects is an excess of wonder and a joyous union in the third term (and its remainder).

Despite the apparent successes of Dame Beulybon and the Erle of Tolous's relationship, it cannot escape from the lingering "happily ever after" conundrum. Even though Dame Beulybon is not to be silenced, if the erle were to become difficult or even abusive, as did the emperor before him, what could she do? Even though she has carved out a space for herself, she can only maintain it as long as he allows it to be so. Rymenhild, Josian, and The Fere do even less well. As each heroine's desire is transformed into a reflection of her husband's, the couple becomes one. The cost of the couple being in complete accord is the collapse of the interval: the separateness, the individuality, the subjecthood of the wife is lost. The problem with love in these tales is, therefore, that it comes at the cost of feminine subjecthood.

Further, within such a relationship there is no space for the narrative to interrogate the question of whether or not the husband remains an acceptable partner to the wife after marriage. While many cultural taboos were in place to mediate relations between the sexes both before and after marriage—taboos against incest, against men entering or seeing into the lying-in chamber, or seeing his wife bathing, for example—there were few sanctions available to women if these taboos were broken. A pertinent example is the taboo against husbands seeing their wives in labor. The breaking of this taboo is found in the Middle English *Octavian*,[54] in which the husband is induced to spy on the wife just after childbirth. The mother-in-law has arranged for a drugged male servant to be placed in the bed next to the wife while she sleeps. When the husband sees them in this compromising position, he has the young man executed and the wife exiled with her newborn baby. Through his breaking of the taboo, she becomes a calumniated wife. She is eventually exonerated, and she and her child restored to the family, but only years later. In other words, even though she is innocent, she experiences all the suffering; but there are no consequences to the husband for breaking the taboo.

It is no wonder, then, that stories might develop to ameliorate the cost to the feminine of the love relation, to allow for a separate feminine agency to continue after marriage. Unlike human women, magical heroines of

romance can, and do, hold their lovers and husbands to account in different ways. The fairy mistress might depart the human world, leaving her lover abandoned and unable to follow her (*Lanval* and its variants). If the couple live together in her domain, she might exile him or not allow him to return (*Ywain and Gawain, Desiré*). More ominously, the loathly lady entraps her man, keeping him in her world when he would rather leave (*The Wife of Bath's Tale, Thomas of Erceldoune*).[55] While these fairy mistresses, if they become wives, observe the same moral and ethical obligations as human wives do, they often have additional mysteriously undefined obligations that extend beyond their husbands, suggesting an existence that also extends beyond the role of wife and mother. These higher obligations appear to contribute to or even motivate the taboos or interdicts against certain behaviors. Unlike in human–human relationships, in fairy–human relationships passivity is not a common characteristic of the fairy mistress, and the taboo provides a recourse should the husband/lover break the conditions of the pact. In these relationships breaking the taboo has consequences.

Melusine and Raimondin in an Amorous Exchange

The taxonomy delineated in the intrinsic prologue of *Melusine* is replete with wonder. The different categories suggest ontological difference, and movement between the categories operates as a nonappropriative engagement; it is not a desire to know, but the attraction of two desiring subjects. In the intrinsic prologue man reaches out to God with the *auctor*, or the learned man. God reaches out to man with His marvels and speaks to man through the prophets. The learned man, wise in self-knowledge, is touched by the wonder of God. It is his special knowledge, that which makes him a learned man or *auctor*, which makes him aware of his own insignificance in the universe, and allows him to recognize God's wonder. Similarly, God's marvels can only attest to His wonder by manifesting themselves on earth. God, His marvels, the learned and unlearned men are in a relation of chiasmic movement, each moving toward the other and back. Nevertheless, the learned man, the *auctor*, and the prophet will always be human, and God will always maintain His proper place, His wonder.

Melusine and Raimondin occupy different places in the taxonomy introduced in the intrinsic prologue. Melusine is one of God's wonders, and Raimondin is an unknowing man. They are necessarily ontologically

different, but they too are drawn toward each other as two desiring subjects. It is the categorical separation that sustains Melusine's substantial agency, but this separation is not inconsistent with the capacity for cross-category movement there and back, which enables Melusine and Raimondin's love relation.

When Raimondin and Melusine meet, each is in need.[56] Melusine is facing exile from the human world. She is half-fairy and half-human, but drawn to the human world. What she seeks is a relation with a human that exists in the human realm. And yet, she must maintain her own "proper place": that private place in which she can be her fairy self, that place of autonomy from which she can negotiate her own subjecthood within the patriarchal world. Raimondin is in more immediate trouble. Having just accidentally killed his lord, he is unable to return to society and is about to become a social outcast. He is confused and grieving, and unable to make rational sense of recent events. Ironically he comes to this personal and social dislocation through his determined ideological stasis. He has been driven there by his inability to accept the unknowable other (as described by his uncle, the earl) and his desire to impose rational order on the universe: to circumscribe, assimilate, and reconstitute it with rationality. His desire to disallow wonder, to consume the interval, in accordance with the model of Grosz' first trajectory, leads to the abyss of the insatiable lack.

Then they meet. They meet in a space between: a place half way between the human realm and the fairy realm, in that conventionally liminal place, the forest. It is a transformative place: at first it is a forest, but later it is cleared and cultivated and cities are built upon it. The castle of Lusignan is built around the fountain *de soyf*, which becomes the source of Melusine's bath.[57] No matter how cultivated and urbanized—indeed how human— this place becomes, it retains its watery connection with the otherworld. It remains liminal. Raimondin is drawn toward it, but that is not enough. Melusine must go out to meet him. She must move away from her own place to meet him. Their meeting is a movement between the one and the other: both Melusine and Raimondin move spatially toward one another.

There is no suggestion of love at first sight. While Raimondin is certainly struck by her "gret beaulte," he is not seduced by it or overcome with physical passion. Rather, he experiences her physical presence as a "grett meruayll" (p. 29, ll. 20–21). Indeed, he is more affected by her wondrous knowledge, which makes him "so abasshed that he wyst not what he shuld ansuere," and "more abasshed than he was tofore" (p. 30,

ll. 17–18, 32), than he is by her beauty. This beginning, in which wonder precedes, is the first sign that theirs is a different kind of relation.[58]

Their relation is not effected by the gaze, of which love at first sight is a romance manifestation, but by touch. This is evident in two key episodes: when they meet near the fountain *de soyf*, and upon Raimondin's breaching the first condition of the taboo. In their first encounter, as Raimondin skirts close to but passes the fountain, Melusine comes up to him, takes his horse by the bridle, and speaks to him twice. He is in a trance-like state and does not respond, but is finally roused when she touches him: "And thenne she toke and pulled strongly hys hand, sayeng in this manere: 'Sire vassal, ye slep'" (p. 29, ll. 8–10). Moreover, touch, feeling, speech, and listening play an important part in their reconciliation. After Raimondin spies on Melusine, he immediately realizes that he has broken the taboo and he retires in bodily distress. After a sleepless night Raimondin hears Melusine approaching and pretends to be asleep. His eyes are closed so he cannot see that she approaches and lies next to him, but he feels it. He sighs at the touch of her body, and she embraces him. He complains of feeling feverish, she replies that he will soon be well, and immediately he feels better: "I fele me wel at ease for your commyng" (p. 299, ll. 28–29). The reconciliation is sanctified by them hearing mass together: "they roos and went to here masse" (p. 299, l. 30).

While touch, feeling, speech, and hearing signal a coming together, the gaze tends to herald a parting. The Earl Emery is killed moments after seeing the future in the stars. Raimondin and Elynas both are forbidden to look, and when they do, they anticipate and/or experience loss. Raimondin's brother induces him to spy on Melusine as the only way to know the "truth," but Raimondin's truth is different from that of the Earl of the Forest. As a result, Raimondin banishes his brother from his sight ("voyde my syght," p. 297, l. 33). Raimondin laments his consuming gaze: "I must lese the sight of her of whom myn eyen toke theire fedyng" (p. 298, ll. 31–32). Once consumed, one loses sight of the beloved object; it is literally eaten up. Moreover, Raimondin upbraids Fortune, as a "fals blynde traytour and enuyous" (ll. 30–31) and as a "falsed & blynd Fortune" (l. 21), blaming her for his loss of the sight of Melusine: "by the/fals blynde traytour and enuyous, I must lese the sight of her" (ll. 30–31). A consuming look, induced by the blindness of falsity and envy, induces the loss of sight in its turn. In the reconciliation of Melusine and Raimondin the gaze confuses with partial knowledge. Raimondin "sawe" that Melusine did not speak of his breach of the taboo

and wrongly "supposed" that she did not know about it. Melusine forgives the transgression because Raimondin "shewed the matere to no man" (p. 299, ll. 17, 18, 20–21): Raimondin keeps his partial knowledge within the universe of their relation, thus elevating their relation above the misinterpretations of the punitive public gaze. Even Melusine has a problematic relation with the gaze: it is her desiring gaze which gets her into trouble in the first place. When she looks down upon Elynas's human realm from Avalon, she covets what she sees, and this leads to her seeking vengeance on her father, and consequently the taboo is imposed upon her. However, by the time Melusine and Raimondin meet at the fountain, Melusine has reconfigured her desire into a nonconsuming desire. She brings it to the realm of the third term (as discussed on p. 71 above in relation to Dame Beulybon).

Thus, the relation between Melusine and Raimondin is effected by a coming together; each must come some way to meet with the other, and what they create between them is considerably more enabling for both of them than their prospects for the future if they remain apart. In this way the meeting of the two in space is paralleled by their meeting in the negotiation of the pact. Their relation begins as an exchange, each offering the other that which the other needs. Each can provide the other with the mechanism for an honorable reentry into human society.[59] The cost to each is nothing more than discretion: the maintenance of the privacy of the marital relation. However, coming together is not enough. It is only one moment in one place in an ever-evolving space-time. They must remain in motion, preserving for themselves their place together by preserving their places alone.

The marriage pact of Melusine and Raimondin traces the chiasmic movements described by Irigaray and, in many ways, parallels Irigaray's notion of the third term. After her marriage to Raimondin Melusine is in a constant cyclical movement of seven days from the human realm into that of the marvelous. This represents movements through space external to herself—as every Saturday she retires to a private chamber, secluded even from Raimondin—as well as transformations within her own bodily space, from human woman to mermaid. The chiasmic movements of Raimondin are of a somewhat different kind. His transformation is not of bodily but social space. He is recuperated from the brink of social fragmentation to a fully reconstituted social subject. And yet, he is other than he was. While to the people of his uncle's/cousin's realm, for all intents and purposes, he appears as he was—indeed the goal is to create such an

impression—he is otherwise in his capacity for composure; he has moved from the hitherto overwhelming impulsiveness of youth, which led to the death of his uncle, to a more reflective maturity. The pact also enables Raimondin to (re)turn to places he never dreamt of as he regains lands lost when his father was betrayed a generation earlier (pp. 65–97). In accepting the pact Raimondin reveals a potential that was not previously evident. His proper place is that place where he finds the capacity to leave behind his desire to contain, consume, and order the world in a knowable way and to enter into the pact with all its attendant conditions. The pact provides the mechanism for each to preserve his or her own proper place; indeed, for Raimondin the offering of the pact helps him find that place.

Raimondin and Melusine meet in the third term, but each keeps to themselves his or her own proper place. For Melusine her private Saturdays are a part of that place. It is that unseen space which constitutes a refusal to be a thoroughly seeable and knowable object of the masculine gaze. It is that specificity which is irreducible to the masculine. For Melusine it is the necessary condition for autonomy, and for the self-construction of the feminine as epistemological subject. In order to make her own knowledge, to make her own truth, she needs the recognition of difference. For Irigaray the unseen/unknown manifests itself as sexual difference. She does not, however, position sexual difference only in the feminine morphological body; sexual difference is in the other: "Who or what the other is, I never know. But the other who is forever unknowable is the one who differs from me sexually."[60] The response to the discovery of sexual difference is not fear and consequently containment. The response is "surprise, astonishment, and wonder in the face of the unknowable."[61]

Raimondin is "astoned" upon his first meeting with Melusine, and is struck with wonder repeatedly, at each new meeting, as each new piece of evidence of her otherness becomes apparent: "whan Raymondyn herd her spek, he beheld her, and perceyued the gret beaulte that was in her, and toke of hit grett meruayll" (p. 29, ll. 19–21); "Right dere lady, ye telle to me the trouth of alle thinges that ye say; but moche I meruaylle me how ye may so certaynly know it" (p. 30, ll. 33–35); when Raimondin returns to the fountain *de soyf* he sees Melusine's entourage and he marvels twice over: "he meruaylled gretly" (p. 37, l. 15), "he meruaylled moche" (p. 38, l. 11); Raimondin returns again with the officials to claim his land as measured by the thong, and when they see the work that has already been done there they are all "gretly meruaylled" (p. 43, l. 25).[62] For Raimondin

the unknown, the unseen, the proper place of Melusine represents wonder and provides a never-ending source of new encounters.

Certainly Melusine's experience of her encounters with Raimondin are not filled with the same sense of wonder, but for all her special knowledge, she does not know the extent of Raimondin's potential for trust or betrayal. Prior to their marriage she tests his capacity for discretion. Three times she sends him back into the social world, and each time she gives him a secret to keep: the first time he departs he takes with him Melusine's plan for him to escape punishment for the death of his uncle, the second time he takes the trick of the thong, and the third the announcement to his family of his marriage to the unknown princess. Each time he returns having kept his word, her trust in him grows: "My dere frende, wel I wote that wel ye haue hold alle that I introduysed, or taught you of, And therfore fro hens fourthon I shall trust you the more" (p. 37, ll. 26–29).[63] Each time he returns, the land which will be theirs has been developed a little more,[64] this physical improvement paralleling the growing strength of their relationship.[65]

Thus, the relation between Melusine and Raimondin operates as a chiasmic movement from their own proper places to the third term and back. Moreover, their relation has ramifications beyond the space-time delineated by their proper places and the third term, spilling over into the realm of Irigaray's remainder. As social subjects within the chivalric universe Melusine and Raimondin are quite other than, although effected by, themselves in the universe of their private relation. In the private negotiations of their marriage pact it is she who sees first, speaks first, and offers the pact, signaling a different kind of romance heroine,[66] and a different kind of hero; in honoring the private pact he has made with Melusine, he does not question her autonomy or her own space as epistemological subject. Raimondin accepts Melusine's privacy, her proper place, and consequently her truth in the spirit of marital trust and fidelity. However, convention reigns in public: Melusine always defers to him, never usurping his power or undermining his authority.[67] As an individual within the chivalric universe and as lord of their vast landholdings Raimondin has enormous power. Moreover, he has significant physical prowess, demonstrated not only by his success in battle but also in the joust which occurs during the celebrations after his marriage. Despite these different manifestations of the self, it should not be forgotten that the public success is dependent upon the private pact. It is that excess of product which is entirely dependent upon their successful relation, manifesting itself in the public realm as their landholdings and honor grow.

Melusine and Raimondin's world is utopic. It is a relation between two, each of whom is a desiring subject, the subject position of each being assured by the maintenance of his or her own proper place. It is a relation between the one and the other predicated upon difference. The act which brings it all to ruin is an act which circumscribes difference. Driven by sexual jealousy, Raimondin spies on Melusine. In so doing he casts Melusine as "other," not only as knowable and containable but also as ontological negation. Like so many male protagonists before him, he is ready to assume at the slightest hint that Melusine's privacy necessarily translates to sexual transgression. In other words, he assumes that her secret is necessarily *about him* and that it must be such a secret that cuts to the very heart of his being as a masculine subject. His assumption thereby circumscribes her being, recasting her as one who exists only in relation to himself. Until this moment Raimondin is a learned man concerning his relation with Melusine: he is wise in that his special knowledge of Melusine puts him in a position of knowing that he will never know; he is wise in his acknowledgment of difference. In this he emulates his uncle the earl, who epitomizes the learned man by accepting the yawning gaps in his knowledge as the space of wonder: the wonders of God's universe. Wonder, which is encountered in the intrinsic prologue in the relation between God and the unlearned man, and in the episode of the Boar Hunt between God and Earl Emery, is valorized in the text as having a lineal connection with God. Difference, as experienced by man between himself and God, is simultaneously repeated and retold in the relation between Melusine and Raimondin. God and man differ in terms of being, whereas Melusine and Raimondin differ in terms of being and sex. Difference differs, now including sexual difference. Melusine is a fairy in which the wonder of God manifests itself, but she is also the feminine.

In the intrinsic prologue of *Melusine* we find a curious elaboration of the other. The taxonomy of being identifies four main categories hierarchically arranged: man, *auctores*, the fairy marvelous, and God. The line of alterity runs between *auctores* and the fairy marvelous. Melusine is the marvelous; she is also feminine. Pressine, her mother, is the marvelous, and she is also feminine. Melusine makes a claim to alterity, to nonappropriative difference, which she sustains through the mechanism of the pact. In this way the tale makes a claim for women who, in Middle English romance, despite an increasing agency, still have difficulties. Marriage brings them an insurmountable obstacle: the husband. At worst, the husband can disallow difference and alterity in the wife, and she has no answer. Even at best, the "happily ever after" narrative suggests an accord that disallows

difference. Translating the agentive wife into a fairy is enabling; it brings into conversation the possibility of sustained wifely difference. It ameliorates the problem of love by granting to the feminine protagonist an existence that is not defined in terms of the love relation; indeed, she may have an existence that is elsewhere not only to the marriage but also to the text of the romance itself. Wonder and the marvelous, and even the nature of fairy, are not necessarily markers of nonhuman being; indeed, Melusine is always half-human. In the text of *Melusine* wonder and the marvelous are instead markers of difference unavailable to masculine knowledge. It is a difference he cannot contain, and for which he cannot be responsible. It goes beyond him. It is a difference not defined in terms of the masculine. Paradoxically, the cost of this strategy is also the nub of the difficulty: the "happily ever after" moment. In the tale of *Melusine* there is no "happily ever after." And yet this strategy provides a space to discuss the capacity of women—as builders, town planners, powerful administrators, and educators—while simultaneously sidestepping controversy by making Melusine a fairy. In the next chapter I turn to Melusine as builder, but not only as a builder of castles, cities, and communities, although these are significant acts. She also constructs a robust and resilient architectural space through which she can nurture and nourish her own subjecthood.

Notes

1. Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 179–180.
2. See Saunders and James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (New York; Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Jacques Le Goff reads Melusine as a fairy of economic wish-fulfillment.
3. Geraldine Heng, "Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory," in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, eds. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Utrecht: John Benjamins, 1990).
4. Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* offers a well-known example of the "calumniated wife" in its reworking of the "Constance" story. For a thematic study of the Middle English romances that feature this trope, see Margaret Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* (New York: The New York University Press, 1927). For a study of the later romances through to Shakespeare see Helen Cooper, "Women on Trial," in *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). For a study that includes tales from elsewhere in the medieval world see Nancy

B. Black, *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2003).

5. Geraldine Heng, "A Map of Her Desire: Reading the Feminism in Arthurian Romance," in *Perceiving Other Worlds*, ed. Edwin Thumboo (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), pp. 250–251.

6. Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1995), p. 121.

7. Roberta Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 24–30.

8. Helen Cooper, "Love Before Troilus," in *Writings on Love in the Middle Ages*, ed. Helen Cooney (New York; Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 28.

9. Virgil, Book XII, ll. 64–70. Cooper, "Love Before Troilus," pp. 25–43.

10. For an illuminating discussion on *Erec and Enide* see E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), particularly Chapter 4, "Rewriting Men's Stories: Enide's Disruptive Mouths," pp. 151–202.

11. Krueger argues that Lunete has entered the economy of the exchange of women as a participant but Laudine, the lady of the manor and heroine of the tale, remains an object of exchange within that economy. Krueger, *Women Readers*, pp. 39–51.

12. Saunders traces "mutuality and *trouthe*" through a number of romances from the early thirteenth century (*King Horn*) through to the late fourteenth century (*Sir Launfal*), marking these characteristics as key elements in love relations in Middle English romance rather than *fin amor*. Corinne Saunders, "Love and Loyalty in Middle English Romance," in *Writings on Love*, ed. Cooney, pp. 45–61. Alexander notes that "in their own ways, the English poets create a sharp awareness of the quality of the love experience, and it is depicted as something in which woman and man participate on equal terms," Flora Alexander, "Women as Lovers in early English romance," in *Women and Literature in Britain: 1150–1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 24–40, on p. 35. Alexander cites *Sir Tristrem, King Horn,* and *Florys and Blauncheflour* as examples, pp. 35–36. This characteristic was also noted later in the period by Gervase Mathew, and interpreted by him as "completely un-*courtois.*" Gervase Mathew, "Marriage and *Amour Courtois* in Late Fourteenth-Century England," in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (London, 1947), p. 129 as cited in Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 136.

13. For a discussion of these features see Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 24–27.

14. Judith Weiss, "The Wooing Woman in Anglo-Norman Romance," in *Romance in Medieval England*, eds. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 149–162.

15. "King Horn" in Fellows, *Of Love and Chivalry*, p. 7, l. 252; p. 9, l. 296; p. 26, l. 950. She also wrings her hands, p. 26, l. 982; weeps tears of blood, p. 37, l. 1408; and swoons, p. 12, l. 428; p. 39, l. 1481.

16. Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 30.

17. Judith Weiss notes that of the fourteen extant Anglo-Norman romances, six feature heroines who woo. Judith Weiss, "Power and Weakness of Women in Anglo-Norman Romance," in *Women and Literature in Britain*, ed. Meale, p. 15.

18. D.D.R. Owen (ed.), *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances* (London: J. M. Dent, 1987), p. 247.

19. Eugene Vinaver (ed.), *Malory: Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 649.

20. Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, pp. 58–59 (see Introd., n. 1).

21. Elizabeth Grosz, "Desire, the Body and Recent French Feminism," *Flesh. Intervention* 21/22 (1988), pp. 28–33.

22. According to Grosz: "Desire, in psychoanalytic theory...seeks to replace the fantasized, lost plenitude of the child's maternal symbiosis...Desire is the endless chain of substitution. It is an effect of the processes of oedipalization that demands that the child sacrifice the mother," Grosz, "Desire," p. 29. This insatiable desire is the price of entering the symbolic.

23. Weiss notes that Josiane sings to support herself, Lenburc in Thomas's *Horn* is an expert at chess, Iseut can play the harp and heal, Felice in *Gui de Warewic* has been taught the seven liberal arts, and many heroines use magic to protect them from unwanted sexual advances. "Power and Weakness," pp. 13–15.

24. "King Horn," in Fellows, *Of Love and Chivalry*, p. 13, ll. 445–462. Alexander notes that Rymenhild is not only assertive and competent, she is also apparently autonomous, acting without parental authorization (Alexander, "Women as lovers," p. 31). This argument can be countered, however, by citing Rymenhild's father's later accusation that Horn seduced Rymenhild as evidence that she was in fact acting outside the bounds of propriety. "King Horn," p. 19, ll. 707–714.

25. Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 59.

26. Weiss, "Power and Weakness," p. 15. Weiss notes that "in several of the Anglo-Norman romances the woman encouraging and manipulating the man actually emerges as stronger and more capable than he [is]," p. 15.

27. Weiss, "Power and Weakness," p. 12.

28. For differing views see Crane, *Insular Romance*; Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth*

to the Death of Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), and Krueger, *Women Readers.*

29. In *King Horn* and *Bevis* the instigation of the love relation by the heroine becomes a catalyst for the reclamation of land and honor. Similarly, in *Ipomadon* The Fere's tournament instigates a chain of events which ultimately draws out Ipomadon's prowess. Weiss argues that love can also be interpreted as an enemy of promise. Weiss, "The Wooing Woman," pp. 155–156.

30. Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 64, as cited by Gail M. Schwab, "Mother's Body, Father's Tongue: Mediation and the Symbolic Order," in *Engaging With Irigaray*, eds. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor and Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 372.

31. Jennifer Fellows, "Mothers in Middle English Romance," in *Women and Literature in Britain*, ed. Meale, pp. 41–60.

32. See also Carol M. Meale who notes a similar outcome in fifteenth-century romance, "Entrapment or Empowerment? Women and Discourses of Love and Marriage in the Fifteenth Century," in *Writings on Love*, ed. Cooney, pp. 163–178. Saunders also notes that loyalty and *trouthe* between love protagonists in Middle English romance tend ultimately to promote social order. Saunders, "Love and Loyalty," p. 49.

33. This second tradition Grosz presents as "less powerful and privileged within the history of philosophy," "Desire," p. 29.

34. Grosz, "Desire," p. 29.

35. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), originally published as *Totalité et Infini* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), p. 179.

36. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 33.

37. John Carmi Parsons, "The Pregnant Queen as Counsellor and the Medieval Construction of Motherhood," in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1996) and Nancy Mason Bradbury, "Beyond the Kick: Women's Agency in Athelston," in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005).

38. While line repetition appears in tail-rhyme romance, it is not so common in *Athelston* that the significance of this instance is lost.

39. Bradbury, "Beyond the Kick," p. 152.

40. Bradbury, "Beyond the Kick," p. 155.

41. E.g., *Octavian, Sir Aldingar, Sir Tryamour, Valentine and Orson*, and Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" and "Clerk's Tale" all have heroines who are abused in some way and remain passive.

42. Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 269–323. See also Black, *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens* and Schlauch, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens.*

43. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), p. 8. Hereafter referred to as "*Ethics.*"

44. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 9.

45. Arlyn Diamond finds her goodness excessive, "The Erle of Tolous: The Price of Virtue," in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, eds. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

46. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*. Irigaray is indebted to Levinas' conceptions of ethics and alterity. However, she does critique and modify them to accord with her own project of an ethics of sexual difference. She addresses his work directly in "The Fecundity of the Caress" in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* and "Questions to Emmanuel Levinas" reproduced in both Margaret Whitford (ed.), *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991), and Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (eds.), *Re-Reading Levinas* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991). In this discussion I am indebted to "Luce Irigaray and the Ethics of Alterity," Chapter 5 of Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, and "Levinas and the Question of the Other," Chapter 5 of Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

47. Irigaray, "Questions to Emmanuel Levinas," p. 180.

48. Whitford comments on the difficulties of translating this passage: "a union/communion of two sexes, in a crossing of boundaries or exchange, in itself produces a third, a work, an ecstasy, a 'child' which is not yet necessarily a physical child—the grammar of this sentence makes it difficult to disentangle." She concludes that "[t]he fusion of syntax perhaps poetically echoes the fusion of bodies" (Whitford, *The Irigaray Reader*, p. 188). Elsewhere she elaborates on Irigaray's theme of love as a passage between (Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, p. 164). Gail M. Schwab interprets Irigaray's third term, alongside the angel, the mucous, and love, as primarily functioning as a mediator between two subjects (see "Mother's Body, Father's Tongue," p. 368). See Chanter, *Ethics of Eros* and Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1998).

49. My emphasis, Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 9.

50. As described by René Descartes in *The Passions of the Soul*, article 53, p. 358, which Irigaray critiques in "Wonder: A Reading of Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*," *Ethics*, pp. 72–82.

51. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 8.

52. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 8.

53. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 74.

54. See Angela Florschuetz, "Women's Secrets: Childbirth, Pollution, and Purification in Northern *Octavian*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 30 (2008), pp. 235–268. For discussion of taboos see Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966); Fiona Harris-Stoertz, "Pregnancy and Childbirth in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century French and English Law," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 21, no. 2 (2012), pp. 263–281; Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, The Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Gail McMarray Gibson, "Seeing and Performing Late Medieval Childbirth," *JMEMS* 29, no. 1 (1999), pp. 7–24.

55. Cooper puts forward an interesting view that the loathly lady's beauty is directly proportional to his morality and ethics: as he errs, she is ugly, but as he learns to acknowledge his error and seek to change, her beauty is restored and thereby he is rewarded. In this view the loathly lady literally embodies the sanction against the erring husband. Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 144.

56. For a discussion of Melusine and Raimondin's parallel narratives see Sara Sturm-Maddox, "Crossed Destinies."

57. In medieval times castles and monasteries were built—wherever possible—over streams, springs, or wells in order to minimize the cartage of water; N.J.G. Pounds, *The Culture of the English People: Iron Age to the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 161. This lack of closure provided a point of vulnerability which was brimming with marvelous and/or disastrous potential: in the Germanic tale *Undine* the well in the courtyard must be plugged in order to keep out the bad river sprite; in the various tales and mythologies of Brittany the pulling of the plug out of the well, or the dyke, or the forgetting to close the gates, caused inundations leading to complete and permanent submersions. For a survey see Jean Markale, *Women of the Celts*, trans. A. Mygind, C. Hauch, and P. Henry (London: G. Cremconesi, 1975); see also la Motte-Fouqué, *Undine and Other Tales*, trans. F.E. Burnett (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1867).

58. The marriage of Melusine and Raimondin is compatible with both aristocratic and ecclesiastical marital ideals. Kooper describes aristocratic and ecclesiastical ideals of marriage as based on reason (as opposite to passion), chastity, and monogamy. See Erik Kooper, "Love and Marriage in the Middle English Romances," in *Companion to Middle English Romance*, ed. Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), pp. 172–176. Moreover, in terms of aristocratic marital practice, Raimondin is a younger son, and his chances of making a prosperous marriage would, in the normal course of events, be slim. While the mystery

surrounding Melusine's parentage is somewhat irregular, Raimondin's family is pacified by her obvious wealth: "none there was at the fest/but that he preysed gretly Melusyne of her yeftes. And alle abasshed & meruaylled they were of her grete ryches. And they all sayd that Raymondyn was gretly mightily and valiauntly marryed," (*Melusine*, p. 59, ll. 17–21). Theirs is a prosperous love in every sense: they accumulate wealth and honor, produce a large family, and have a happy personal relationship. While it may have begun in terms which could almost be described as unromantic, the success of the union in personal terms is demonstrated by the distress which is occasioned by its dissolution: the pages of lamentation and swooning are worthy of any pair of "trewe louers." This success lasts for at least twenty years.

59. Sturm-Maddox notes that each is necessary for the realization of the predicted fate of the other: "Hence, the singular design of Jean's romance, in which the fairy and the mortal protagonists are reciprocally related, each to function as auxiliary to the other," Sturm-Maddox, "Crossed Destinies," p. 18.

60. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 13.

61. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 13.

62. In addition to Raimondin's wonder there is that of his cousin's officials, upon whose return to Poitiers the story of the thong is described in marvelous terms, six times over three pages (p. 44, l. 34; p. 45, ll. 9, 14, 19, 28; p. 46, l. 8). Everyone marvels at the great riches and extensive retinue at Melusine and Raimondin's wedding. Even the hunt and the boar that killed the earl are described as wondrous.

63. See also p. 47, ll. 6–9, 12–14, and, after they are married, p. 57, ll. 15–21.

64. The first time he returns, there is a new chapel at the fountain *de soyf*, with many "ladyes, knyghtes, & Squyers whiche made to hym grete feste and praysed hym gretly" (*Melusine*, p. 37, ll. 13–15), the second time "grett tranchis or keruyng was made within the harde roche/and they fond al about it grete trees throwen doun to the ground" (*Melusine*, p. 43, ll. 22–24), and the third the magnificent wedding festival is already prepared (*Melusine*, p. 50 ff.).

65. Sturm-Maddox argues that Melusine's narrative sequence endows her with "a past, a motivated present, and a future fraught with consequences for herself and for others" (p. 17). Therefore, this narrative will not be determined solely by Melusine's sovereign will. Sturm-Maddox asserts that both the historicity of Melusine and her singular vulnerability to the vagaries of another give her an equality with her mortal partner which is unlike those of other fairies of lay or romance. Sturm-Maddox, "Crossed Destinies."

66. It is not the only point in the tale where we see Melusine as a powerful speaking and epistemological subject. E.g., she advises her sons at length

before they depart on their adventures (pp. 110–114), and she also leaves specific instructions to Raimondin prior to her own final departure (pp. 317–319).

67. In this respect the tale has some parallels with Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, though Melusine, with real power at her disposal, does not experience the difficulties of Dorigen.

Building Gender

Recent theorizations of space from disciplines such as sociology, human geography, and anthropology have introduced new ways of thinking about space that have enriched the ways we can read historical spatial contexts. These new approaches allow space to be understood more deeply than as an inert and empty physical volume which one can occupy or inhabit, or as a two-dimensional surface across which one can traverse. Rather, space is produced by social practices, by relational interactions, by movement and processes of living. This conceptual shift has opened up new vistas of appreciation of the operation of space and its significance in a developing sociality. This chapter develops on the argument that the private place in the love relation, as discussed in Chapter 2, was constitutive of the subject of love, to argue that the private place is constitutive of subjecthood more broadly, not just in the love relation. The private place is the result of an ongoing process of a spatial practice. It is not simply a physical place; it is a literal and figurative space that is private to the self and also in a productive relationship with one's own outward movement, with the movements of others, and with the spatialities of oneself and others that are thereby produced. It is a space–time, a place in which to live, to move freely, autonomously, to leave and come back to—in which to reconstitute one's uniqueness. Melusine builds such a place. Indeed Melusine is a prolific builder: she builds towns, castles, a dominion, a family, and a dynasty. All that she builds is underpinned by the pact that ensures her private place through weekly cyclical retirement. This spatial practice continues

for more than twenty years, and, in each cyclical movement, Melusine's subjecthood is reinscribed.

Before a consideration of the construction of Melusine's private place can begin, it is helpful to reflect upon the spatial practices of the time, particularly those of the English great house. These are the most pertinent for this discussion not only because Melusine built and occupied such a house (many such houses) but also because the great houses of the nobility set the ideal standard of behavioral practice for the upwardly mobile and socially aspirational merchant class (the presumed reader in this case), as indeed the royal palaces set the standard for the houses of the nobility in turn. With this in view, the first part of the chapter discusses some examples of gendered spatial practices in English great houses, castles, and palaces of the period. Most significantly for my argument, it is important to note from the outset that the private spaces of men and women were not the same. The inescapable fact that English medieval society was trenchantly patriarchal means that the sense of appropriateness of place or location was determined by patriarchal values. Medieval spatial practice was therefore enmeshed within cultural understandings of gender, which included stories about the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of women, and their consequent need for external control for the good of themselves and their menfolk. These beliefs about women legitimized a spatial practice of enclosure.[1] The examples considered in the first part of the chapter therefore focus on spatial practices that effect the enclosure and surveillance of women. It considers both how the activities of individuals interact with these spaces and how spatial practices in general and over time impact on the development of physical space. This historical material is helpful in giving a grounded context within which to consider, in a more nuanced and historicized way, medieval practices of gendered space as they are presented and problematized in romance literature, a consideration of which is offered in the second part of this chapter.

Discourses of enclosure and surveillance ostensibly operated to protect women from themselves and others. Literature, however, problematizes these pretentions, acknowledging that women were often unsafe in these environments, even within the apparently protected space of the inner household of the great house. Protectors could abuse their position of trust with little fear of negative consequences to themselves; new wives could be treated as intruders, making the husband's home no home for them; husbands themselves could be manipulative, violent, or incestuous. The inner household was always open to the privileged few, whether they

were other members of the family, service staff, or even personal body-guards; but as a place of enclosure, particularly for the wife, there was no easy escape. Enclosed and surveilled, the inner household of literature was not characterized by feminine autonomy and more often presented a denial of any private place.

If the private place is constitutive of the subject—if physical space is emblematic of mental space, of the separateness of a person, the individuality of a person, the uniqueness of a person—then the denial of the private place is not only a denial of physical independence but a subjugation that extends into abstract space-time and strategically interferes with constructions of identity. Irigaray goes further, connecting spatial autonomy with ontology. She argues that within western patriarchy women do not have their own home, literally or figuratively. Irigaray contends that women are literally trapped in houses built by patriarchal social processes (architecture, planning, predetermined social roles) and metaphorically trapped within discourses that privilege masculine values (philosophy, science, theory, knowledge itself). Irigaray posits that without their own home (their own literal and figurative space) women are left in dereliction; they are homeless, literally without existence.

These difficulties highlight the need for women to rebuild, to build their own homes, their own places—physical and abstract, imaginary and symbolic—on their own terms, rather than constantly reiterating the narratives of others. They highlight the need for women to develop their own spatial practices within their own spaces. The third part of this chapter considers the gendered spatial practices as presented in the text of *Melusine*, particularly the heroine herself as builder. In order for Melusine to live in the human world, she is obliged to establish her own home on her own terms. This involves a life-long cyclical reinscription of Melusine's private place, which is constitutive of her own subjecthood within a world whose default position would be to contain her. This chapter is therefore concerned with the tension between, on the one hand, the enclosure and surveillance of women from without, and on the other hand, the independent spatial practices that enable subjecthood from within.

Spatial Speculations

Since Henri Lefebvre heralded a change in thinking about space with his *La production de l'espace* in 1974, new theorizations of space have emerged from disciplines such as sociology, human geography, and anthropology.

These new approaches to space have enriched the way we read historical contexts and have been enthusiastically adopted by medievalist historians, particularly since around 2000.[2] These theories emerged in response to the then prevailing western notion of space that was based upon classical philosophy. This view, the "old" view, imagined space geometrically, as an inert and empty physical volume demarcated by boundaries, with no connection to time. It was something one could walk around within, occupy, or inhabit. Space could also be represented as a two-dimensional area (such as in a map or plan), thereby reducing the three-dimensional to a static surface that one could move upon or traverse across. From this perspective, space was understood as entirely separate from the self.[3] Such conceptualizations of space, while they might satisfy certain scientific purposes (e.g., of measurement?), were found to be inadequate when translated into other disciplines, especially the social sciences and humanities. The humanities and social sciences are more focused on social and cultural formations than are the traditional hard sciences, and at this time they were keenly absorbing new ideas about power relations and bodily politics. Indeed, from a humanities and social sciences perspective, the old models of space began to be read as reductive and appropriative. Reductive, because they do not recognize space as necessarily existing in time and as always subject to change through time, and appropriative, because space as surface or volume can be marked out, occupied, taken over, and owned as an inert "thing." Moreover, if the subject is located outside space, it is thereby positioned as the agent who can act upon that space. This view therefore implicitly inscribes a power relation between the subject and space.

Following Lefebvre, thinking about space has shifted to an appreciation of movement and flow, of spatial practices rather than demarcated areas or volumes. In these approaches the self is embedded within the complexity of spatial production. An important contributor to these developments is Doreen Massey, whose analysis further informs Irigaray's approach as she teases out some of the specific operations of spatial practice and their relations to identity. Massey offers three useful "propositions."[4] First, she emphasizes the relational constructedness of space: "identities/entities, the relations 'between' them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive."[5] Second, for interrelations to occur, there must be simultaneously existing multiplicities of space. Multiple spaces mean that there are multiple, coexisting possibilities or pathways, and multiple identities. Third, space is always in the process of being made. It is a product

of material spatial practices, including interactions with others. As a result, it is never completed, never closed, but always open to further interactions: the movements and flows of others. For Massey, the key elements of space are, therefore, interactivity, multiplicity, and time. Moreover, as process, space has a past, a present, and a future: it has narrative potential. If there are multiple spaces, then there are simultaneously coexisting multiple histories and possible future trajectories: multiple narrative identities ever in production. Further, the ongoing process of interrelations means that new connections are always being made or perhaps missed—that potentials are opening up, closing off, or changing direction, and so on. Space itself therefore has a generative force: unexpected connections or juxtapositions can have effects on subsequent events. Indeed, Massey posits that "[s]patial form can alter the future course of the very histories which have produced it."[6]

Massey's formulation of space as multiple, relational, and always in process offers a broader context within which Irigaray's thinking of subjecthood can be understood. Her connections between the spatiality of individuals and their historical trajectories are particularly pertinent to Irigaray's focus on the local conditions under which one subjecthood can be realized. Chapter 2 has already touched on spatial configurations of subjecthood in the exploration of the love relation and Irigaray's formulation of the amorous exchange. This is only one facet of subjecthood for Irigaray, whose project encompasses an accession to subjecthood beyond the love relation. In Irigaray's thinking, subjecthood is a continual process of "becoming," of "fulfilling the wholeness of what we are capable of being."[7] It is not, however, limited to an achievement or end result; it is not located in a fixed time and place or any fixed state: "obviously, this road never ends."[8] Rather, it involves ongoing movement away from the private place to the horizon and back (from the finite to the infinite and back, from subjectivity to objectivity and back). Irigaray's subjecthood is based upon spatial practices, cyclical movements to and fro, including a habitual return to the private place as the space of uniqueness, "where something positive can be elaborated."[9] While the private place might therefore serve as a retreat from interactivity and other external forces, it does not exist in stasis. Indeed it cannot remain unchanged. Every time the subject returns, she returns changed, and this changed subject effects change within the private place. In other words, the private place is essential to but not sufficient for subjecthood. The private place exists in an evolving conversation with the subject and the subject's relations with the

exterior world. To interrupt this movement would be to "paralyze" the subject in her becoming and thereby thwart subjecthood.[10]

Invoking Massey alongside Irigaray, the spatiality of an individual is formed by movement to and from the private place, the horizon of potentialities of the self, and relational interactions with others (the horizon and the other also being co-implicated). The historical trajectory of an individual spatiality, of the spatiality of an individual, the story of their movements, is suggestive of a narrative identity, a life story that is unique to each individual/entity and their spatiality. If, as Massey argues, space has generative effects, then one's own spatiality—the space that one creates through this movement—has a productive effect on the future, on the future identity of that individual. This necessarily means that predetermining or constraining spatial form will have a limiting effect on the social processes possible within it. This will in turn limit spatial development. For Irigaray, this is the problem for women who live in spaces—houses, cities, nations; discourses, epistemologies—built by men. If one lives in spaces produced by others and one has little capacity to change that space, then the narrative/story/history one lives is not one's own.

GENDERED SPACES IN THE HOUSE

The development of domestic spaces tells us something about the lives lived within them and the people who built them. The trend in development also tells a story of its own. If we consider space as a product of social processes and practices over time, then the gendered spaces of English great houses reveal different narrative trajectories to those that might be immediately apparent.

While we might imagine that medieval spaces were garrulously communal, with little private space for the individual, research has revealed that from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries medieval spatial practices followed a consistent trend toward increasing privacy.[11] Buildings grew in size across the period, providing more varied spaces for different purposes, and public and private spaces became more and more distinct. As the number of chambers grew, they became increasingly private and their uses more specialized. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they began to be assigned to individuals for their personal use, and smaller withdrawing rooms, withdraughts, or retiring rooms began to appear. Inner rooms accessed from the chamber, these withdrawing rooms were more private than the chamber itself.[12] The private spaces of men and women, however,

were not the same. Indeed, an examination of pertinent spaces can reveal very different, almost oppositional, gendered spatial practices. In her discussion of English royal castles and palaces from the 1160 to 1547, based on access analysis, Amanda Richardson identifies a striking trend in the gender-inversion of the depth of royal bedchambers and wardrobes.[13] These two chambers are particularly interesting to this discussion because each of these two chambers is productive of a certain kind of gendered identity: the bedroom as the reproductive center of the house is aligned with the female body, and the wardrobe as the financial and administrative center, and thereby the source of considerable and far-reaching power, is usually associated with men. Given the privacy just described, it would be expected that these spaces would be productive of gendered subjectivities in some form. On closer examination, however, while these spaces intersect with particular gendered spatial practices, only a masculine subjecthood is forthcoming. For the feminine, privacy slips all too easily into a space of objectified enclosure.

As royal residences grew in size, the private apartments of kings and queens expanded to include whole suites of rooms: chambers, bedchambers, withdrawing chambers, wardrobes, and even bathrooms and closets. Richardson observes that across the period from 1200 to 1500 the queen's chamber became increasingly deep (depth referring to the number of architectural steps from a specified public space).[14] This was sometimes achieved through changes in access routes and the building of new architectural steps (vestibules and lobbies), rather than an actual change in location,[15] suggesting a deliberate or even ritualized construction of retirement. Some have argued that this seclusion was more an assertion of status, or even the contrivance of an idealized image, rather than a desire for modesty or chastity.[16] Others have interpreted this deep enclosure of women as the operation of disempowerment.[17] Either way, it is undeniable that this increase in distance from the public space made it more difficult for the queen to be involved in the immediacy of political action. The king's bedchamber, on the other hand, was always close to the center of things (if not already the center of things). Not only was he accessible to his courtiers, but he also had quick and ready access to the public spaces of the palace, including monumental gateways and other symbolic entrances.[18] Rather than privacy, evidently it was more important for the king to be in close proximity to public spaces, to have ease of movement to and fro, and to know who was coming and going.[19]

The contrast in depth between the bedroom spaces of the king and queen maps neatly onto the different expectations of their gendered bodies, particularly in relation to space and spatial practice. The queen's bedchamber, consistently the deepest in the palace, was a space that replicated her own reproductive body. Secluded, enclosed, and inward looking, this hidden place was the reproductive core of the family. The queen's bedchamber, indeed her own body, could not be thought of as a private place in Irigaray's terms because the king's entrance could not be refused. The queen was obliged, not only by her position as queen to provide an heir but also by the medieval concept of the "marriage debt" to deliver her body up to the husband as required.[20] Neither the bedchamber nor her body was a private place because the queen ultimately did not have control over the threshold. This correlation between the queen's body and her bedchamber suggests that the queen's body was imagined not as a living being that had its own generative powers but rather as a space that housed the lives of others—the lives produced and nurtured by others. Her body was a space in the traditional sense: an inert space that could be entered, occupied, taken possession of, and lived in. In this appropriative, reductive version of space she is space and he, as a subject quite separate from space, simply occupies it/her. This is consistent with the value of the queen's body to the community in which she lived, as a vessel to produce the king's child, rather than as an active co-contributor to the generation of a child jointly conceived.[21] In these ways we can see that the queen's lived existence is formulated around an imaginary construct of her body, as determined by the needs of patrilineage. The king's bedchamber, on the other hand, is readily accessible and outwardly focused. The king lived in an enabling space: it facilitated the agency of his physical body, which in turn flowed into political power. His busy spatial practices created an active and engaged spatiality, while the queen was reduced to an old version of space—appropriable, inhabitable, and inert.

Richardson also notes that the king's chamber changed location, often from monarch to monarch, as the demands of administration and government evolved. For example, Henry II, Edward II, and Edward III all built new privy chambers at Westminster, and the major building works at the Tower of London in the mid to late thirteenth century involved dramatic changes to the location, proximity, and depth of the king's chambers.[22] The king's chambers changed as a result of changes in spatial practice; they evolved to accommodate new demands. In contrast, during this time, at these royal residences, the queen's chambers altered not at all. Indeed,

the queen's chambers changed infrequently from the thirteenth century on (other than in their increasing recession).[23] Richardson notes that the queen's apartments, in their "location, views, and continuity of use," were characterized by "stagnation." The contrasting views from the windows of the queen's and king's apartments at Nonsuch offer another example. The king's view was over a fashionable garden with innovative features, while the queen's view was over "old-fashioned" gardens designed for repose. For Richardson this reveals "a gender ideology which had changed little since the thirteenth century."[24] It is not surprising that the king's chambers were built to serve his individual needs, but it is worthy of note that the queen's were not. The queen was housed—literally and figuratively, from generation to generation—in a space built to patriarchal design.[25]

Massey's approach to space can be helpfully invoked at this point. Massey contends that space and time are inextricably enmeshed, that social processes and spatial form are interdependent, and that neither one precedes the other. In a chicken-and-egg cycle with an evolutionary bent, spatial form as an outcome of social processes reinscribes those social processes but also has "emergent powers" which can influence future events. If this is so, then the king's evolving spaces were both a cause and a consequence of the history of his changing identity as the center of a growing bureaucratic administration. In other words, the king's spaces changed in response to his changing needs, but the spaces in which he lived also had a material effect on the future story of his life as it was lived in that space; his spaces and his stories were in constant and influential conversation. The queen, on the other hand, lived in a space that changed little over time. While each queen's life would of course be unique to some extent, the unchanging space in which she lived, according to Massey's theorization, would have a limiting effect on the development of alternative ways of living within that space. Each queen's own life story would therefore be constrained within a longer story which had at its core an architectural trajectory of enclosure. This story, of many lifetime's duration, was more sustained than that of any one life; it literally outlived, and thereby overwhelmed and subsumed, the life story of any one queen.

An interesting contrast to the spatial location of royal bedchambers is the location of the royal wardrobes. The queen's wardrobe was her most accessible space, whereas the king's wardrobe was the deepest of all his chambers.[26] Richardson offers no interpretation of this neat inversion, but it seems to me that an explanation is available if we read these chambers as intimately connected with the spatial practices through which they

evolved. Indeed, these spaces and the activities that went on within them were similarly gendered to those of the royal bedchambers, and a reading consistent to both wardrobe and bedchamber can be made.

The wardrobe in the noble house began as a place to store clothes, but soon developed to include financial and administrative functions.[27] The queen's wardrobe (as an administrative unit) was smaller than the king's, but had the same structure with its own officers and personnel who managed and supported the queen's household (including her service staff and her retinue). A separate wardrobe enabled the queen's household to function independently from the king's, which was particularly useful during their frequent travels. It should be noted, however, that the wardrobes of different queens enjoyed varying levels of independence. For example, while Eleanor of Provence's wardrobe accounted directly to the exchequer and therefore bypassed the king's wardrobe completely (at least from when she was about 18 years of age), the wardrobes of other queens answered to their respective king's wardrobe, and sometimes the queen's expenses were incorporated into the king's wardrobe to such an extent that her wardrobe became little more than a subsidiary of his.[28] While each individual royal couple evidently had their own arrangements, as noted above the spatial practice of generations makes for a stronger and more lasting narrative than any individual life story. The multi-generational spatial practice of the queen's wardrobe was that it was the most accessible, the most permeable and least deep, of her chambers.[29] In other words, it was proximal to the public spaces and had multiple approach routes and entry points. This level of accessibility, even visibility, suggests that the level of privacy was minimal. Positioning the financial and administrative core of the queen's household in this location seems contrary to the development of a truly independent financial and administrative unit; rather, it seems consistent with supervision and dependence.

The king's wardrobe, on the other hand, was invariably the least accessible of his apartments.[30] This is perhaps not surprising given that, while it was a domestic office, the king's wardrobe gradually became the site of much government and political business.[31] Many of the king's financial and administrative affairs were carried out in seclusion; negotiations and transactions, political strategy, and the confidential affairs of government were executed deep within the king's private apartments. It is interesting to note that this tendency for the seclusion of the administrative function can also be found in monasteries (run by men) but not nunneries (run by women). Roberta Gilchrist notes that the deepest chamber in the nunnery

was the dormitory, neatly aligning it with the queen's bedchamber.[32] The deepest chamber in the monastery, on the other hand, was often the chapter house, which was its administrative core.[33] While these spaces in religious houses do not reflect "privacy" in the way that we understand the term, in that the dormitory and the chapter house were communal spaces, nevertheless the masculine/feminine contrast remains. Bodily seclusion was the most important for women, whether they were queens, ladies of the castle, or female religious; administrative seclusion was the most important for men, whether they were monks or kings.

It is evident, therefore, that the emergent privacy of the late Middle Ages was not the same for kings as it was for queens. For the king, the seclusion of the wardrobe provided a space of autonomy, of executive functions, of independent financial and administrative management and the machinations of power. The power formulated there meant that the accessibility of his bedchamber had an outward focus, allowing for freedom of bodily movement. For the king, accessible space has more to do with ease of egress *for him* rather than accessibility *to him* (although this may have also been a factor). For the queen, on the other hand, the seclusion of the bedchamber and the narratives associated with it did not provide a space of autonomy. Her lived experience was constrained by an overarching architecture of unchanging space and the spatial practices whose history extended beyond her own. Moreover, her body was aligned with this space, suggesting it too was inert and static, lived in but empty, appropriable and possessable. This story of enclosure is a story of limitation and control. The apparent flip side to this enclosure is the accessibility of the queen's wardrobe; but the queen's separate household is not necessarily an independent one. Her financial and administrative functions are, at best, visible, and, at worst, are merely a subsidiary of the king's wardrobe, under its direct supervision. It would seem that for him, seclusion was privacy; but for her it was enclosure. For him accessibility enabled him to surveil and control beyond his own space; for her accessibility was to be surveilled and controlled. This means that he was the subject of privacy and accessibility, while she was the object of privacy and accessibility.

While each individual king and each individual queen would have had their own social and spatial practices, the preexisting narratives that surrounded them were reinscribed every day through established rituals and social conventions that organized the individual expression of their daily lives. Change to these daily routines was in turn constrained or enabled by the degree of closure or openness—of potential change—of

the physical spaces in which those routines were performed. As has been shown, the physical spaces of queens were subject to little change across the period, constraining her spatial practice within existing narratives that were themselves authored by others. This limited her opportunity to establish any lasting change. While the spatial practices of the queens did not necessarily indicate any forcible enclosure, control was covertly encoded within the architectural space within which they lived and the spatial practices that such spaces allowed.

Women Enclosed in Romance

Middle English romance offers many examples of problematized feminine seclusion. Rather than offering protection or safety for women, the private spaces of the castle are often represented as sites of danger. While threats from outside might occasionally menace, just like domestic violence today, the real risk lies in the betrayal of personal relationships. In *Athelston*,[34] for example, the violence occurs in the public space of the hall but it is perpetrated by the king against his queen, suggesting a public exhibition of intimate hierarchies of power that transcend any public/private divide. The inner household of the castle, as a more intimate, secluded space, and therefore understood as more appropriately feminine, is often depicted as a place of particular vulnerability, and within it women are exposed to abuse which originates from a range of sources. The husband's deputies or representatives of his lineage are common instigators of torment: devious mothers-in-law in *Octavian* and Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" dislike their daughters-in-law and plot their removal; the bodyguards handpicked by the emperor in *The Erle of Tolous* and the trusted steward in *Sir Tryamour* all besmirch their lady's honor after she has rejected their advances.[35] These figures have ready access to their lord,[36] and their influence over him often surpasses that of the wife, as the queen in *Athelston* notes: "He wole doo more for hym, I wene,/Thanne for me, though I be qwene" (ll. 306–307). The inner household is thereby presented as a place of intrigue, in which relationships are long established and the lady—no matter for how many years she may have been resident there—is always an outsider. It is too easy to make the argument that she is a weak point, the location of potential contamination of the patriline, as the emperor's mother in *Octavian* makes clear: "Bot mekyll sorowe dose it me/That Rome sall wrange ayerde bee/And in uncouthe hande" (ll. 106–108). The privileging of these figures and the vulnerability of the lady in this

scenario is explicitly evident in the lord's unconditional belief in their accusations, no matter how ruinous. Regardless of the relationship the lord has had with his wife, or her previously demonstrated good character, the lord seems always ready to believe any report against her; he does not even think to allow her to answer the charges herself. He, who is meant to be her first protector, fails on the first assault.

A particularly cruel example occurs in *Octavian* when the emperor betrays both seven years of "joy and gamen…and other myrthis moo" (ll. 29–30) and the intimate space of the lying-in chamber. The lying-in chamber is an exclusively feminine space especially prepared for childbirth to which the wife retires late in her pregnancy. She remains in this place of seclusion until the "churching" ceremony, about forty days after the birth, at which she is ritually cleansed and welcomed back into the congregation, the community, and the family.[37] The emperor breaks into this room after his mother tells him that his wife, who has just delivered twins, is an adulteress and the children are not his own. He believes her implicitly, despite knowing that his wife conceived after she built an abbey specifically to induce divine intervention into their childless state. Seeking "evidence," he bursts into the lying-in room and discovers a naked servant lying next to his newly-delivered wife (the servant having been bribed by the mother). There are a number of textual markers pointing to this intrusion as a violation of the empress (quite apart from the murder of the "giltless knave"): the empress has just delivered and is "full seke" (l. 141); she is not woken from her exhausted sleep, even by the king's attack on the servant which is played out on the bed beside her; and when she finally does awake from a bad dream and sees blood, she "bygan to skryke and crye" and faints away indicating both shock and physical weakness (ll. 178–183). The ritual practice of "churching" is then invoked as "the lawe in that lede" (l. 186), reinforcing as law a custom which in effect provides a period of convalescence to the mother, away from the family and most particularly the husband. The churching ceremony and the building of the abbey therefore frame the pregnancy and childbirth events, foregrounding the piety of the empress as well as the legitimacy of both the children and feminine space within which they were delivered. The emperor's breaking into that space is thereby not only morally wrong, but legally and religiously so. This is as nothing, however, against his desire to know. He hopes to penetrate the truth of her body by penetrating the lying-in chamber.

The bed, that most secluded of all places, the deepest in the castle and the most "protected," is often the place where these heroines experience

their affliction. The bed is a complex place. It is the most private place of sleep and therefore vulnerability (the empresses in *Octavian* and *The Erle of Tolous* are betrayed while sleeping). It can also be a private space of thought, productive of agentive action (alone in bed, Criseyde weighs up the pros and cons of love). It is also, however, in every case cited here, metonymic with sexuality and/or sexual reproduction. It is the location of conception and birth: that place where feminine materiality intersects with masculine legitimacy in the production of patrilineage. As such, it can too easily effect the wife's reduction into a reproductive space, bringing her subjecthood to the brink of destruction as a matter of course (not to mention the risk of physical death). The moment of childbirth is, therefore, simultaneously the moment of her greatest power (in both the realization of her life-giving capacity and fulfilling her primary marital role as reproducer of a lineage) and of her greatest vulnerability (both physically and as a being independent of her reproductive function).

In many of these tales the lord appropriates the lady's reproductive power, attacking her at her most vulnerable, and thereby annihilating her subjecthood, leaving her in exile either without or within the home. In *Octavian*, the emperor rejects his wife's reproductive power by denying legitimacy to their children[38] and then physically exiles her and the children from the "protection" of his home. In *Athelston*, the king terminates the queen's reproductive power by violently killing the child in her womb, thereby nullifying her apparent power over him. Curiously, though, she is not silenced by this act of violence. She goes down fighting from her bed, sending a message through the bishop to plead once again with the king, but we never see nor hear of her again. She disappears from the text at the end of this scene at line 332. Griselda in "The Clerk's Tale"[39] has her reproductive powers exploited cruelly by her husband. Approaching her "allone a-nyght" (l. 464), as she lies in bed soon after the birth of her first child, he begins twelve years of emotional brutality as he takes each of her two children from her, at timely intervals, and pretends to kill them. (He also tells her he has annulled their marriage and forces her to attend upon his "new wife.") Walter colonizes his wife's reproductive power; he literally harvests her reproductive energies, requiring her to reproduce but then removing her children from her. He is motivated by nothing more than "to tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe" (l. 452).[40]

These examples suggest that the spatial practices of the inner household expose women to domestic abuse; they restrict but do not protect. The bedroom, depicted as an inner space, even as a space that is protected

by custom, law, or religion, can never be safe from the husband. When aroused by potential threats or simply curiosity, his spatial practices become penetrative (*Octavian*), colonizing ("The Clerk's Tale"), and even claim control over life and death (*Athelston*). In all these tales the space of the bedroom is aligned with the space of the female body; to appropriate one is to appropriate the other. Focusing abuse in the bedroom, in the bed, in the female body, especially during pregnancy or after childbirth, sets a stark contrast between women at their most vulnerable and the disproportionate force that is used against them. This draws attention to the exploitation of women that can so easily occur in this space. Moreover, the lord does not protect his wife from attempted seduction by others. When others breach the bedroom in an explicit attempt to produce a bodily breach (*The Erle of Tolous*, *Sir Tryamour*), the lady must defend herself. Even though she is doing her husband's work, in both defending her body and his patriline, she suffers nevertheless: she is cast into dereliction through imprisonment or abandonment. There is no consistent driver for these abuses. While threat to patrilineage is common, there are other less worthy motivations: in *Athelston* the king seeks to silence the queen's intercession, and in "The Clerk's Tale" he is simply curious. It would seem, therefore, that the husband can abrogate responsibility to protect at will. He needs no justification. In these tales, a wife lives (or dies) at the whim of her husband, and the tales draw specific attention to this injustice.

There is another option, not one that was readily available for women to actively choose, but certainly common enough in medieval England. Feminine self-enclosure within one's own home was theoretically possible for widows.[41] Such opportunities are reflected in literature, in Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," for example, as the wife chooses whether or not to remarry. There were, however, also substantial risks for a woman who lived alone (even with a service staff). If she was young and beautiful, she could present a delectable challenge to any spirited player in the love game who happened to be nearby at the time. In both literature and life, the pursuit of a widow presents little risk to a lover but offers the potential of considerable gain. For her, however, the risk is substantial. It could mean a loss of her reputation and social standing; at the very least, it would encroach on her autonomy. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*[42] highlights the extremities of this gendered difference in risk and return, teasing out in considerable detail the potential callousness of the masculine risk-free position and the irretrievable loss that can be visited on the female lover. Criseyde is a wealthy widow, living in Troy at the time

it is under siege by the Greeks for Paris's theft of Helen. She has her own home, her own large "paleis" complete with an extensive walled garden, and as a widow she presides over her own household of many servants with her nieces for companionship. The tale details the pursuit of Criseyde by her uncle, Pandarus, who acts as a go-between to bring about a love affair between her and Troilus, a prince of Troy. In this pursuit, Criseyde's private place is relentlessly broken down by masculine spatial practices of entitlement. These spatial practices result in a reinscription of her as an object of privacy and accessibility, while Pandarus, Troilus, and ultimately the lords of Troy, are outwardly orientated and appropriative spatial subjects. From the moment Troilus strides around the temple, teaching his young knights how to look over all the ladies of the town and "preise and lakken whom hym leste" (Bk I, l. 189), masculine spatial behavior is one of proprietary right. The same gendered imbalance in spatial practices that are encountered in the English great house would seem to apply here, with devastating consequences.

From the beginning of the tale Criseyde is acutely sensitive to societal expectations of gendered spatial enclosure and surveillance. Her vulnerability as a lone widow has been further exacerbated by her father's defection to the Greek camp, which has left her in a politically strained position. One of her defensive strategies is to seek (and receive) a formal mark of protection from Ector, first Prince of Troy (Bk I, ll. 110–126). Another strategy is the careful arrangement of her domestic space. She lives with her nieces, who as well as being companions offer protection on two levels: their virginal presence restrains any inappropriate forwardness from opportunistic suitors of the widow, and they operate as witnesses to Criseyde's honor. The nieces are ever present whenever anyone visits her palace, in the "paued parlour" (Bk II, l. 82), the garden (Bk II, l. 814), and the hall (Bk II, ll. 1170–1172). While she is complicit in allowing Pandarus to draw her away from the group under various ruses—to look out windows (Bk II, l. 1186) or to walk in the garden (Bk II, l. 1117)—their conversations always remain in the public spaces of the house and visible to the nieces' supervisory eyes. In these ways Criseyde attempts to preempt the risk of "goosissh poeples speche" (Bk III, l. 584). Nevertheless, Pandarus does succeed in small violations of her personal space, thrusting a letter down her dress (Bk II, l. 1155) and coming to the house at all hours ("by-tyme/a-morwe," Bk II, ll. 1093–1094), but he does not attempt to breach the physical boundaries of her private chambers.

Pandarus is full of resources, however, and while he dare not effect an outright assault he uses other tactics to keep Criseyde constantly under siege. He successfully introduces the idea of Troilus into the private space of her closet, chamber, and even bed by manipulating her thought processes. He maneuvers her retirement to her closet, with her mind full of the new idea of Troilus as a potential lover, just at the moment when Troilus's victory parade passes by, flooding her room with noise and spectacle (Bk II, l. 599); on the way to dine she sneaks off to her chamber to read Troilus's letter, just pressed upon her by Pandarus (Bk II, ll. 1173–1176); and she retreats again to her closet to write a reply at Pandarus's insistence (Bk II, l. 1215). He succeeds in infecting her private spaces with the idea of Troilus, his artifacts, his words, his image. At night, alone in bed with her thoughts, she reflects upon the possibility of becoming his lover (Bk II, ll. 911–924). And yet, Criseyde's private chambers remain inaccessible in a physical sense. She has control over the threshold, and she receives no visitors there.

To break her defenses Pandarus must get to her outside the physical protection of her home and away from her nieces. He seems to have free rein across all public and private spaces in the city and uses his knowledge of gendered spatial arrangements to entrap Criseyde in unexpected private encounters with Troilus. While the privacy of Criseyde's personal rooms in her own home is carefully preserved, men's bedchambers are easily accessible from the public spaces of the house and are open to visits from friends and relations of both sexes. Pandarus has free access to Troilus's bedchamber, visiting regularly and often unannounced (Bk I, ll. 547–549; Bk II, l. 1305, Bk IV, ll. 352–355). When Troilus is (apparently) ill in bed at Deiphebus's house, all the guests would visit him if Pandarus did not limit the number of people allowed in the sickroom (Bk II, ll. 1646–1649). In Pandarus's own house, his bedchamber is also only a few steps away from the public spaces; he gestures toward it as "my litel closet yonder" (Bk III, l. 663), suggesting that it is "over there" but still in sight (so not deep within the house). Pandarus uses this proximity and openness of male bedchambers to lure Criseyde away from the company into apparently "safe" semi-public spaces.

Pandarus then takes advantage of alternative access routes to manipulate the occupancy of those male bedchambers without the knowledge of the other guests. In Deiphebus's palace, Pandarus manages to distract Eleyne and Deiphebus and maneuver them out of Troilus's bedroom by an alternate route unseen by other guests, thereby clearing the way for a

private interview with Criseyde, who is caught unawares. The episode in Pandarus's bedchamber is even less subtle. Pandarus carefully arranges the apparent protection of Criseyde, with her ladies sleeping outside her open door, and himself sleeping one step beyond. Pandarus makes much of this arrangement, enumerating to Criseyde the multiple spatial buffers that will protect her (Bk III, ll. 659–668), and that her ladies are within earshot ("That whom yow list of hem ye may here calle" Bk III, ll. 686). Unbeknownst to Criseyde or any of the other guests, however, the room has multiple access points ("stuwe doore" Bk III, l. 698; "secre trappe-dore" Bk III, l. 759), which allow Pandarus, and later Troilus, to come and go from the bedchamber undetected from outside, especially after Pandarus quietly closes the bedroom door. And yet, Criseyde's seduction is not so simple as a breach of spatial boundaries. She is furious and wants to call out to her ladies, but Pandarus warns that her honor would be tainted by such exposure and urges secrecy for her own protection (Bk III, ll. 762–770). In other words, he argues that secrecy will protect her honor, while using it against her person. He continues to press Troilus's suit with lies and trickery for a further 167 lines (Bk III, ll. 771–938), grinding down Criseyde's resistance. She is spatially, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted by the end when she says, "doth herof as yow list" (Bk III, l. 939).

The earlier discussion of gendered spaces in English great houses argued that putting women in a space that does not change for centuries prescribed an overarching multi-generational narrative that constrained the construction of alternative identities. This tale shows that putting a woman in a space designed for men by men—an open space that is accessible and permeable with distributed access routes—transforms Criseyde's narrative from struggling feminine independence into a masculine story of the containment and exploitation of women. While the space might be open, it is only so *for him*; for her it is as closed as any prison. Criseyde finds herself in the wrong place, written into the wrong story. It is Pandarus's story: the story he wanted to give Troilus. Further, it is a patriarchal story of the vulnerability of a woman alone. In this story, the only way she can protect herself is to remain in her house; if she leaves its protective walls no number of attendants can save her. In this story, to live a life in the world, a woman needs to belong to a man to be safe.

The tale thereby reinscribes the necessity of "protection," of reducing women to objects of enclosure and surveillance for their own good, but at the same time it presents masculine protection as an empty promise,

a simple tactic to enable further exploitation. Not only does Pandarus betray his role as Criseyde's protector, but also, when Troilus could use his influence as a prince of Troy to intervene in negotiations to trade Criseyde for Antenor, he does not. Troilus and Criseyde's relationship, being a secret, disallows Troilus's interference. In other words, the secrecy that was meant to protect her honor is once again used against her person. Finally, there is no pretense that Criseyde has any private place or space of her own. She is traded with the Greeks against her will, then forced to make a crude bargain with Diomede, agreeing to become his mistress in exchange for his "protection." Relinquishing her very identity for apparent survival, she is left in utter dereliction in the Greek camp.

The difference between *Troilus and Criseyde* and the tales discussed earlier in this section is that for Criseyde there is no redemption: no equilibrium or restoration is achieved. Even in *Athelston*, where the queen disappears, the sister is reinstated in the king's favor. In the other tales, the wife's restitution to her former place is enough. Husbands are legally within their rights to treat their wives as they wish, and the long-suffering patience of women is ultimately rewarded. In these tales the vulnerability of women within the house provides narrative impetus, but they convey an undertone of critique nevertheless: that husbands are disproportionately cruel and that women deserve protection, even if such protection is not forthcoming. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the narrative impetus is provided by the tension between Criseyde's attempts to sustain her private place and the masculine project of stripping it from her. As the tale progresses, the pressure of masculine entitlement is unyielding, while feminine vulnerability becomes more and more acute. Cornered in Pandarus's bedroom, left with no agency of her own, Criseyde is blackmailed by fears of exposure into making herself available to Troilus. In other words, in Pandarus's house she is made an object of privacy and accessibility; he is the subject pulling the strings. Criseyde is tricked, coerced, maneuvered, and finally inescapably trapped within spatial practices that reinscribe, literally upon her body, masculine entitlement and feminine vulnerability.

Evidently, even the practices of custom, law, and religious ritual were not enough to protect women if men chose not to observe the rules. Women alone, whether worse off because they had no male protector or better off for the same reason, were potential targets for the relentless pursuit of unscrupulous seducers. If *Troilus and Criseyde* is any guide, there are no behavioral limits in this quest: lying, maneuvering, and even physical abduction are all acceptable. In all the tales cited here women are

reduced to victimhood, with restoration of their position in the family being their only possible compensation for years of hardship, but only if they remain utterly unblemished. Criseyde is not so good. Men, on the other hand, experience no restraint. There is no requirement for them to be good, fair, or consistent. On the contrary, their lives are enacted through spatial practices of entitlement.

In *Melusine*, such eventualities are forestalled by Pressine's taboo. This taboo requires Melusine to build her own home, and, within it, house her own private place, a space from which others are excluded, most particularly the husband. It is not just any home. It is not in the image of a patriarchal castle considered earlier in this chapter. Rather, it is a combination of defensive structures and relational spaces, of protective boundaries, but also outward looking narratives, of distinctive relations with space and time. The private place is notably not a bedroom; that too is reconfigured and will be considered further in the next chapter.

Melusine as Builder

Given the difficulties presented to medieval women by the social processes outlined above it is interesting to note the critique of and resistance to such processes that can be found in imaginative writing. Literature problematizes enclosure and surveillance as effective mechanisms of protection, leaving open for questioning the motivation of these practices. The text of *Melusine* does not limit itself to problematizing enclosure; rather, it explores the possibilities of what might happen if women are set free from such constraints. In this romance, Melusine builds her own home, and it is through the processes of this building, and the cyclical living that spins off from it, that Melusine creates a space for her own subjecthood. Melusine begins along this course as a result of Pressine's taboo. This is usually referred to as a "curse" but I recast this as a gift, indeed Pressine herself refers to it as a "gyfte" (p. 15, l. 13). Through this gift, Pressine gives Melusine the guidelines for maintaining her autonomy, her very existence in the patriarchal world. She gives her the means to produce her own private place.

Melusine was born in the human world but was raised on Avalon by her fairy mother, who fled to Avalon after her husband broke the taboo that excludes men from the birthing chamber. Drawn to human society, Melusine would have joined her father in the human world when she was

fifteen had she not discovered her father's betrayal and vengefully imprisoned him. This unfilial act inspires her mother to impose the following
condition upon Melusine's return to the human world:

> yf thou fynd ony man þat wil take the to hys wyf/ and that he wil promytte
> to the that neuer on the Satirday he shall see the, ne þat shall declare ne
> reherce thy faytt or dede to ne personne/thou shalt lyue thy cours naturell,
> and shall dey as a naturel & humayn woman/and out of thy body shall yssue
> a fayre lynee, whiche shalbe gret & of highe proesse. (*Melusine*, p. 15, ll.
> 15–22)

Melusine must find a man who will not betray her as Elynas had betrayed
Pressine. If Melusine finds such a man, and can sustain this relationship
for a human lifetime, she will die a natural human death. If, however,
such a relationship cannot be sustained, Melusine will return to her previous condition until Judgment Day. In other words, Melusine's desire
to live in the human world cannot be achieved by simply moving from
one place to another; she must achieve two things. First, to find a space
which is beyond masculine enclosure and surveillance, a private place, she
must build her own home and maintain control of its threshold. Second,
to live a human life and to achieve a human death, she must renegotiate
her relationship with eternity, and craft a careful connection with human
time. Melusine's relationship with space and time is therefore complex
and multi-dimensional, especially when set in contrast to Raimondin's.
She must work toward a bond with human space-time, symbolized by the
public face of her life six days a week, while at the same time maintaining
the private place of the seventh day, upon which the other six depend.
Raimondin's relationship with space and time is simple by comparison,
marked by local and strictly human dimensions.

Raimondin flits across the surface of space with little apparent connection. He moves in relation to space but appears unaffected by it. He traverses
space, moving across it as though it is a stable surface, engaging with it only
insofar as it provides support while he presses down upon and springs from
it, a fixed geography supporting his peregrinations. He spends a significant
amount of narrative time in motion across this two-dimensional plane: he is
the most eager of hunters, ahead of the pack; he travels to and from Poitiers
twice before his marriage and to Brittany and back shortly after; and, at
the end of the tale, he goes on a pilgrimage to Rome. While he appears to
be—indeed operates as though he is—entirely separate from this space, his

voyages across it are not neutral: his travels to and from Poitiers facilitate the acquisition of land at the fountain *de soyf*, his journey to Brittany makes possible the reclamation of his patrimonial lands, and on his return trip he surveys the landscape, not quite claiming it, but identifying it as claimable. His relationship with space as geographical location positions it as that which can be owned, a claimable asset, fixed and inert, while he remains a free agent, untethered, able to come and go at will.

Melusine's relationship with geographical space is quite different from Raimondin's. Her movements across space must be inferred from physical evidence; there is no narrative of journeying. Melusine builds a number of castles and towns which sit unmoving on the landscape. The castle of Lusignan is the first example and sets the tone for the rest:

> not only with one warde/but two strong wardes, with double walles were there, or oon coude have comme to the stronge donjon of it. Round about the walles were gret tours machecolyd, & strong posternes/and also barreres or wayes gooyng out fourth encysed and kerued within the hard roche. (p. 62, l. 34 - p. 63, l. 4)

Later, when Melusine builds the town of Lusignan, more towers, deep ditches, and strong walls ("XX foot thikk" p. 83, ll. 19–20) are built. Ten new castles/towns and two existing towers newly fortified lie heavily on the landscape, the weighty excess of masonry denoting and connoting permanence. Unlike Raimondin, who flits across the surface of geographical space in a feast of busy activity, Melusine's footprint runs deep. She is more inextricably bound to the landscape, literally grounded into the surface of the earth, with every new stone fortress she builds. In this way she makes a claim to human space.

Melusine's movements in airy space are much smaller in scope than Raimondin's. Raimondin moves about within airy space with large physical gestures that are appropriative and oppressive. In his wild horse-riding, his jousting displays, his one-on-one combat, he is constantly on the move, not only carving out a larger bodily space for himself than would otherwise be required but also constantly in competition with others, hoping to infringe upon the spaces of others, to reduce their capacity to occupy space, to constrain their bodily movement. Through the appropriation of this space Raimondin dominates and oppresses others. Melusine, on the other hand, has measured bodily movements that are befitting a courtly lady. Her spatial practices soften the impenetrable severity of the castle walls, allowing movement across thresholds, and maintaining a space of

welcome outside the town walls. Melusine is never seen far from her castles and towns; she is never seen to traverse the landscape. Rather, she cultivates prosperity, hospitality, and home. An accomplished hostess, she entertains guests with lavish feasts and diverting amusements (pp. 52–59, 63, 102). Defensive measures, such as trumpeters keeping watch from the highest battlements, are turned to hospitable effect, enabling welcome parties to be dispatched to greet (friendly) visitors. When Raimondin returns to Lusignan after his journey to Brittany, Melusine herself goes out to greet him and escort him across the threshold (p. 102). We see Melusine dwelling in these spaces: she instructs her sons with tact and wisdom (pp. 109–114), she gives Raimondin strategic political advice (pp. 65, 314, 318), and she and Raimondin live together in domestic happiness at Merment: "The veray and trew hystorye witnesseth that Raymondin & Melusyne were at merement making grete joye for the prosperous estate & good Fortune of theire children" (p. 295). Unlike Raimondin's gadding about the countryside with arms flailing, infringing upon and appropriating the space of others, Melusine invites guests into the social spaces of her home, even requesting them to participate in the naming of her first castle (p. 63).

Her spatial practices are therefore relational, participatory, and welcoming. This has at least two effects. First, the thresholds of Melusine's spaces are demonstrably open, but the looming edifice of her castle walls remains. She maintains control over these thresholds; they are open at her discretion. Second, by promoting the relationality of her otherwise formidable castles and towns through hospitality, gathering townsfolk together, inviting guests, and welcoming unexpected visitors, Melusine creates social spaces which are filled with people interacting with each other. These movements necessarily invoke a human scale of activity, of time and space, and help to ground her in human space-time.

On a more intimate level, human time is also emphasized in the relation between Melusine as a mother and her unborn children:

> After the feste was ended, Melusyne, that was grete with child, bare her fruyte unto þe tyme that alle wymen owen to be delyured of their birthe. (p. 64, ll. 32–34)
>
> his wyf & lady, which thenne was grete with child, and bare her terme/ the which expired, she made a fayre child that was her second sone. (p. 102, ll. 29–32)
>
> Here saith thistorye, that the vij[th] yere after Melusyne bare the fyfte child, of whiche at thende of ix monethes she was delyuered. (p. 104, ll. 14–16)

The gestation of Melusine's children is explicitly aligned with that of "alle wymen," dispelling any lingering doubts about the humanity of her reproductive processes. Moreover, the emphasis on carrying the child for the full human term of gestation renders it not only human, but unerringly standard, unequivocally normal. There is nothing unusual about her pregnancies: they run for "ix monethes," terminating neither early nor late, there are no multiple births, and her childbearing years run a normal course, with a child every year or two for the first eleven years of marriage.[43] Melusine is a devoted mother ("The veray hystory saith that so long norysshed Melusyne her children, that Vryan, whiche was theldest & first born, was xvij yere old" p. 105, ll. 13–15), and the mutual pain occasioned by her final departure evidences a close attachment between mother and child ("Melusyne came euery day to vysyte her children, & held them tofore the fyre and eased them as she coude" p. 322, ll. 19–21). Unlike Pressine's enforcement of the childbirth taboo, which veils the later stages of pregnancy and the birth itself, necessarily feeding reproductive mystery,[44] Melusine's pregnancies, births, and childrearing are explicitly humanized through alignment with human time, process, and maternal feeling.

The narrative of Melusine's all-too-human childbearing is closely interwoven with her building program. Apart from the building of the first castle and town (pp. 62, 88), and the birth of her first son (p. 64), the bulk of her building and her birthing is relayed across two and a half pages of text (pp. 103–105). This compressed narrative is explicitly located within human time, with years marked off and each child numbered: "The second yere after folowyng she hadd a sone," "her foureth man child," and "the vij[th] yere…fyfte child…the eight yere…vi. child…the ix[th] yere…that was the vij[th]…Melusyne was two yere without birth of child, but true it is that in the xj[th] yere she had her x[th] sone"[45] (p. 103, l. 16 - p. 105, l. 8). The building program is compressed yet further, completed in two phases immediately after the births of the second and third sons:

> Thistorye sayth & certifyeth that whan the lady had ended the terme of her childbed, and that she was releuyd…And that same tyme the lady Melusyne bylded bothe the Castel & toune of Melle. Also she dide doo make Vouant & Mernant. and after she made the bourgh & toure of saynt Maxence, and bygan the Abbey there. (p. 103, ll. 5–14)
>
> The second yere after folowyng she hadd a sone that was named guyon… And that tyme Melusyne bigged & fownd many a fayre place thrughe the

lande of Poytou unto the duchie of Guyenne. She bilded the Castel and þe burgh of Partenay…she dide doo make þe Toures of Rochelle & the Castel also…That toure made the lady to be walled & fortyfyed round aboute with grete toures machecolyd, and made it to be called the Castel Eglon… she edefyed Pons in Poytou and fortyfyed Xaintes…and after she made Tallemounte and Tallemondois and many other tounes & fortres. (p. 103, l. 16 - p. 104, l. 2.)

Given that Melusine's castles and towns are characterized by strong walls, great towers, deep ditches, and various other substantial fortifications, it must be assumed that she builds in two or three years what would normally take a number of human lifetimes to complete. The passage does not, however, convey a sense of frenzied activity. While Melusine is repeatedly positioned as the actor in the building process, the verbs "bilded," "bygan," "made," "fownd" do not indicate a particular act, but are broader and more general terms that facilitate narrative compression. While some detail is offered of architectural features ("That toure made the lady to be walled & fortyfyed round aboute with grete toures mache-colyd"), no process is described. The sense of process is further under-cut by the sheer volume of her constructions. So many castles and towns appearing one after the other turns a series of events into a list of effects: "Partenay," "Rochelle," "Eglon," "Pons," "Xaintes," "Tallemounte," "Tallemondois." The sense that process is being replaced with solid effect is further accentuated by the absence of any reference to Melusine's move-ment across the landscape. Whenever Raimondin traverses that landscape we are sure to be told. Melusine, on the other hand, is not seen to travel. Instead, she seems to orchestrate the building of her castles effortlessly, gesturally, from an unspecified location.

This short passage of birthing and building carefully manages the rela-tionship between process and time. Human time is foregrounded through the childbirth narrative and constrains the building program to two, or at most three, years within this narrative. The processes of building are backgrounded through strategic rhetorical and lexical choice, foreground-ing instead the numerous buildings that are the effects of these processes. Melusine does not appear to travel from place to place, further de-emphasizing movement. All that remains is a compacted narrative relating the apparently effortless emergence of a dynasty within human time.

At the same time, however, despite these careful representational strategies, the smooth surface presented by this compressed narrative is

somehow taught and fragile. There seems to be almost a double gesture: a concealment but also a pending revelation. A tension remains that is characterized by excess. The dual narrative of birthing and building is brimming with excess, both reproductive and productive. Melusine's productive excess in her building capacity is staggering. In the year between the births of her second and third sons, Melusine builds four towns, a castle, a tower, and an abbey; between her third and fourth sons, she builds five towns, two castles, and two towers. This level of production is simply not conceivable in the human time frame within which it is ostensibly contained. Melusine's reproduction, on the other hand, is quite possible in human terms: to give birth to one child a year is not extraordinary. And yet, her children carry the marks of a different kind of surplus. Each of her sons bears a bodily mark from birth that exceeds any normal understanding of what constitutes a "birthmark." They each bear a "monster" mark: oddly shaped faces, mismatching eyes or ears, only one eye or three eyes, large fang-like teeth, large birthmarks on the face, nose on top of the head, and so on (pp. 65, 103–105). Notwithstanding their evident strangeness, these marks have no narrative consequences. Throughout the tale no-one comments derisively upon them, and princesses fall in love with the sons despite these defects. In this passage, however, these marks disrupt the smooth surface of Melusine's perfectly human reproductive record. The effects of Melusine's productive and reproductive excess are so great, and so carefully enumerated, that they invite attention, but no further information is forthcoming (the issue of the defects is never resolved). This absence necessarily destabilizes the perfect narrative of effortless dynastic production as it suggests an extra-textual narrative that lies beneath, unspoken, unseen.

A reconsideration of the building and birthing passage, thus prompted, reveals that Melusine's building program is compressed differently from the compression of the birthing narrative. The birthing narrative is a simple narrative summary; in other words, events that occur over a number of years are told in brief. This summary allows the narrative to move efficiently from one set of key episodes to another, without slowing down its momentum with unnecessary detail. The building program, however, is not presented as a simple narrative summary. As noted above, the building program could not possibly be completed in the denominated time frame. The narrative is compressed through the use of verbs that are general rather than specific ("bilded," "made," "fownd"). It is precisely these points of greatest compression that have the most narrative potential.

Within statements such as "Melusyne bylded bothe the Castel & toune of Melle" the verb "bylded" becomes a point of vulnerability in the narrative surface, a point that can be leveraged to break open the narrative, and out will pour not only reproductive and productive excess but also relations to space and time that exceed all human conception in its broadest sense.

Breaking the text open at this point and teasing out what has been compressed is not difficult. The audience already has some details about Melusine's building practices, revealed when she built Lusignan early in the text:

> she anoone aftir made to comme grete foyson of werkmen/as massons, Carpenters, and suche that can dygge & delue. Whyche at her commandement fylled dounne the grete trees, and made the roche fayre and clene. There Melusyne sett euery man to werk. eche one dide his Crafte. they encysed the roche & made a depe & brode foundement. and in few dayes they brought the werk so ferfourth/that euery man wondred of suche a fayre and stronge bylding so soone doon. And euery Satirday Melusyne payed truly her werkmen/and meet & drynk they had in haboundaunce. (p. 62, ll. 22–32)

Melusine takes ownership of the project as its architect and director. She sources workmen, directs design, manages workflow, supervises individual workmen, provides them all with food, and pays them regularly. Melusine is a hands-on project manager. It is notable that even though the work is completed with remarkable speed, there are no shortcuts here. The workmen themselves are amazed by the speed with which the building work is done, suggesting that the wonder lies not in them, their tools, or their practices but in Melusine's capacity to bring about a rapid completion. While Melusine's skills as a project leader are evident, the wondrous pace of the work points to time as the pivotal factor.

If Melusine's building practices delineated here in relation to Lusignan are interpolated into the compressed narrative of the wider building program, we can assume that, once again, there are no shortcuts in the building process. Statements such as "Melusyne bylded bothe the Castel & toune of Melle…she dide doo make Vouant & Mernant…she made the bourgh & toure of saynt Maxence, and bygan the Abbey there" can be broken open to reveal massive building projects across numerous geographical sites filled with workmen performing multiple activities occurring simultaneously and sequentially, for weeks, months, and even years. In other words, if pressure is put on the verbs that compress the narrative,

time breaks free. The text breaks open, and time literally expands into these new spaces that open up in the narrative. In this expandable time, Melusine builds, moves, and builds again. Time and space are inextricably mixed in process, and in this continual process Melusine not only accumulates space across the landscape, but also fundamentally changes that space into a dominion.

Melusine's relationship with time moves in and out of textual play. The on-text narrative that runs across the topographical surface of the page constructs a world of human space and time. Raimondin dwells here. All his journeys, his tourneying and jousting, his conversations and negotiations, exist at this level. Raimondin does not exist off-text. He is as transparent as textual presence allows. Melusine's human-scale movements also exist here. In this on-text narrative her relationship with space-time is gentler than Raimondin's; her relational strategies encourage community interconnectedness and participation, which help to secure her location in human space-time.

Melusine's off-text relationships with time, however, are more complex and variable. In addition to the deep and expandable relationship with time, evident in the almost-but-not-quite absences of the building narrative, she also has cyclical and teleological relations with time. Melusine's Saturday retreats represent a temporal and spatial cycle, a repetitive movement away from the collective space, a withdrawal to an unknown space—her private place. This cycle of retreat is explicated early in the text (p. 15) when Pressine lays down her conditions for Melusine's re-entry into the human world. It is reiterated when Raimondin and Melusine meet and Melusine delineates the requirements of the pact, a key element of which is that she will be absent on this day every week and Raimondin must not seek her out or inquire as to her whereabouts or activities. Raimondin's capacity to resist inquisitive pressure is repeatedly tested early in the narrative, particularly when his family continually ask him to discover more about Melusine, her origins, her family, and her other connections. He refuses to engage with his family's curiosity. He dutifully stands by the terms of the pact and does not seek anything more from her than she freely offers. By the time of their marriage, the repetitive demands of the pact have been established: Melusine will retreat every Saturday, and on that day every week Raimondin must reinscribe his commitment to the pact. Melusine's weekly retreat can now move off-text; the cyclical relation to time initiated on-text will keep rolling on in the extra-textual narrative. However, for Raimondin, who deflects

any attempt to know more of Melusine than she offers, who refuses to speculate, there is no off-text narrative.

For Raimondin the purpose of the pact is for Melusine to help him reinstate himself in the social order. It delivers everything Raimondin bargained for: "And gate & acquyred so moche Raymondin thrugh the polycye & good gouernaunce of Melusyne, what in Bretayne, what in Gascoynne & in Guyenne as in Poytou, that no prynce was about hym/ but he doubted to dysplaise hym" (p. 104, ll. 2–7). And yet, Raimondin's increase in wealth and honor is delivered through the building narrative; in other words, it is a result of Melusine's off-text capacity for deep and expandable time. The pact therefore is only the surfacing, the on-text glimmer of the off-text narrative that has its own reality and continues, silently and invisibly, elsewhere. For Melusine the pact literally enables the off-text narrative that underpins her claim to a human life. Melusine's marking of time in the weekly cycle of seclusion, even though it is off-text, secures a foothold within human time, just as her marking of space (building castles across the landscape) secures a place for herself within the physical human world. The pact also allows Melusine to move toward her ultimate goal of a human death. Her negotiation with eternity progresses quietly, incrementally, hidden from view. Each iteration of her cyclical movement of retreat moves her one week closer to a human death. The extra-textual narrative is therefore both cyclical and teleological. It is a life-long story, heading toward the completion of that life. It is an extra-textual way of living that makes it possible for Melusine to live and die in the on-text narrative of the human world.

Melusine's living in the world is therefore dependent upon her cyclical weekly retreat, her cyclical return to her private place. The existence of this private place is identified early, in the negotiation of the pact, and carefully reiterated through Raimondin's premarital testing, but the nature and location of this place is not explicated until it is made manifest in Melusine's bathroom toward the end of the narrative. This is the most explicit and focused instance of Melusine's private place. It is specifically the condition upon which she exists as an equal participant in the love relation as discussed in Chapter 2. It is the place of her own that is not given up to her lover to enter, to know, or to own.

Melusine's bathroom is "deep" and "impermeable" at the end of a "non-distributed route," meaning that it is far from the public spaces, it has only one recognizable entrance, and it is at the end of a single access route.[46] There are, however, two instances of agency that make Melusine's

private place different from the bedchambers of other medieval ladies in history or in literature as discussed earlier in this chapter. First, Melusine herself builds her own home. She builds the castles and the cities, across the whole complex of fiefdoms that she has accumulated over the years. She does not live in her husband's house. Second, she herself controls the thresholds of both house and bathroom. The door of Melusine's bathroom is locked, and only she has the key. Moreover, even if someone should break down the door, it becomes evident that she is not constrained by usual pathways of access. Richardson's "invisible" access, pathways used by service staff and beneath the notice of the high-ranking members of the inner household,[47] take on a new meaning in this text. Melusine can come and go through unconventional means. Her mermaiden form, which she assumes only in this place, suggests that water could be an access point, and, later in the text, she flies out of a window making all windows potential access routes for her no matter how high they might be. Melusine is not hampered by the usual modes of spatial constraint. She builds her own private place, and having built it to her own specifications, she now controls this space and its thresholds. The two agentive acts—building her own home and controlling her own thresholds—mean that Melusine is the subject of her own enclosure, not the object of her husband's.

Up to this point in the narrative, Melusine and Raimondin work as a team. Her substantial agency works in his favor and he does not question the physical and rhetorical boundaries she has set. Her weekly retreat continues for years, a habitual and unquestionable spatial practice.

Raimondin's betrayal occurs in two stages. First, in traversing the castle, in going to the heart of the castle where he has never been before, Raimondin is attempting to inscribe ownership of both Melusine and her castle. Traversing space was identified early in the text as one of Raimondin's spatial practices of ownership, and now he is marking this space out as his own in defiance of their agreement. Moreover, in making a hole in her bathroom door, spying on her in an act of covert surveillance, he is seeking disproportionate and undeclared knowledge of her activities, and thereby making an additional claim to a hierarchical power relationship between them that has not existed before. This breaks the first of the two conditions of the pact: "that neuer on the Satirday he shall see the" (p. 15, ll. 16–17). The second condition, that he will not "declare ne reherce thy faytt or dede to ne personne" (p. 15, l. 18), is broken some weeks later when Raimondin, in front of all Melusine's ladies and the barons of the land, calls her a "fals serpent/by god! nother thou nor they birthe shalbe

at thende but fantosme" (p. 314, ll. 26–28). In this simple act of naming, Raimondin is reducing the years of Melusine's work—her extraordinary building program, her accumulation of land, wealth and political influence, her production of a family of sons, the production of a dynasty, all of which she shares with him—to a misogynist trope of monstrous femininity. In this one discursive act, he denies her off-text life story, her private place; he reduces her deep and expandable time to human limits; and he inscribes her entirely onto the on-text narrative with a misogynist label from masculine discourse.

This is of course profoundly ironic, given that the position from which Raimondin speaks, his status, and his audience, all exist as a result of Melusine's work. The excesses of the building and birthing narrative, the increase in Raimondin's family wealth and honor, the almost-but-not-quite absences in the text that point to an extended off-text narrative, all evidence Melusine's productivity. Even the "mother marks" of her sons problematize the philosophical and medical discourses that discount the maternal contribution to conception and gestation. The flickering of Melusine's life-story between on- and off-text suggests that there is no appropriate way to acknowledge fully her contribution within prevailing gendered narratives. Indeed, the "commyn talking of the peple" does not acknowledge her contribution to the family or to the prosperity of her community at large. This narrative must, it seems, account for her weekly absences, and in doing so it has only two explanations to offer: she is either an adulteress or a fairy doing penance. Moreover, Raimondin's brother accepts these two options as the universe of all possibilities: "I wot not to whiche of bothe I shal byleue" (p. 296, ll. 7–8). In order to prosper, the enormity of Melusine's agency needs to be shielded within the private place. In this way Melusine's bathroom is emblematic of the unrepresent-ablility of women's meaningful contribution, through their own activity, to family wealth and prosperity within patriarchal narratives.

The gendered spatial practices of the medieval English great house made it difficult for women to find a private place. Even at the highest social level women were subject to the narrowing of movement that was a result of cultural narratives and the double standards those narratives perpetuated. These spatial practices played their part in reducing women to their reproductive function; indeed, it would seem that the needs of patrilineage in this regard were in a co-constitutive relationship with the spatial practices that were implicitly encoded in architecture. It is interesting that there are many examples from Middle English romance literature

that problematize these spatial practices, focusing on the exploitation of women, particularly when they are at their most vulnerable. These tales highlight the arbitrary nature of masculine desires and passions, laying bare the weaknesses of men and thereby implicitly questioning their right to authority over women, who are, in these tales, morally superior, even if Criseyde is "slydynge of corage" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk V, l. 825).

Melusine presents a way to address these difficulties. At its core is a pact that recognizes the medieval spatial practices of the enclosure of women and entitlement of men, and faces these challenges head on. By requiring a private place for Melusine, literally and figuratively, the pact releases Melusine from masculine constraint, freeing her to operate at will in the world. *Melusine* therefore tells the tale of what one woman can do when she is set free into the world. Being set free, Melusine can realize her subjecthood in the world through spatial practices that are productive of castles, towns, towers, and communities, as well as interrelations between the spatialities of each and all of these. Even though a large part of the narrative of her subjecthood remains off-text, the results of her work are set out clearly in the on-text narrative. The evidence of Melusine's subjecthood is there for all to see. Although not openly discussed, her subjecthood is tacitly acknowledged every week by Raimondin as he adheres to the pact. This weekly repetition presents both the weakness and the strength in their relationship: weakness because he must continually reiterate his commitment; but also strength, because this reiteration means that he can never forget. Every Saturday he has the opportunity to secure or to breach Melusine's private place.

In many of the tales discussed earlier in this chapter, breaking into the feminine space provided narrative impetus early in the tale. Then, after a long series of events and the passing of many years, restoration of the queen to her family was enough although, notably in *Troilus and Criseyde*, there was no restitution. As a result of masculine betrayal Criseyde's private place is breached, and as a consequence she loses her home, and even her country. She is left in utter dereliction. In all these tales there are no consequences for the masculine. Breaching Melusine's bathroom occurs at the end of the tale. Rather than providing narrative impetus, it is the climax after which there is only a dénouement. And it has consequences *for him*. Restitution is not enough. Apologies, weeping, swooning are not enough. While Melusine's subjecthood remained unspoken, the tacit acknowledgement of her contribution through the maintenance of the pact was enough. The breach of the pact, however, denies her contribution

and negates her subjecthood. Melusine will not be so reduced; the pact will not allow it. While subjecthood in the human world was her goal, in the ultimate analysis subjecthood is more important than life in the human world, than life with Raimondin. Subjecthood is more important than the love relation. This is Pressine's gift.

Pressine's gift keeps giving. The cyclical return to Melusine's bathroom, continually reinscribed every week, is the spatial practice that, through time, becomes the space of Melusine's narrative identity. The bathroom is the nexus of intersecting narratives about which Raimondin knows nothing. This is not part of his story. It is her story, her history, and the future of her family. It is this to which I turn in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Men had great freedom in the treatment of their wives in the eyes of the church and the law through the Middle Ages up until the late nineteenth century. Blackstone's history mentions that, in the "old common law," husbands had an "antient privilege" that was still upheld in the courts in 1765, which, in addition to corrective physical punishment, permitted a husband "to restrain a wife of her liberty, in case of any gross misbehaviour." He goes on to say that "the disabilities, which the wife lies under, are for the most part intended for her protection and benefit." William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765), Bk I, Ch. 15, p. 433.

2. Studies that use spatial approaches to medieval historical analysis are many, including Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (eds.), *Medieval Practices of Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); a concise summary is offered in Megan Cassidy-Welch, "Space and Place in Medieval Contexts," introduction to a special issue of *Parergon* 27, no. 2 (2010), pp. 1–12.

3. This accords with the traditional scientific method, which is based upon empirical observation and thereby requires a separation of the subject from the object of observation.

4. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2005), pp. 9–12.

5. Massey, *For Space*, p. 10.

6. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 269.

7. Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 61 (see Introd., n. 1).

8. Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 61.

9. Irigaray, *Ethics*, p. 9 (see Chap. 2, n. 43).

10. Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 71.
11. Woolgar examines the archaeological remains as well as the household accounts and other documentation of six households: two aristocratic households, two gentry families, and two bishops. C.M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 5. See also, Georges Duby (ed.), *A History of Private Life II*: *Revelations of the Medieval World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), especially Dominique Barthélemy and Charles de La Roncière, "The Use of Private Space," pp. 395–506; Roberta Gilchrist, "Medieval bodies in the material world: gender, stigma and the body," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, eds. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994). pp. 43–61; Amanda Richardson, "Gender and Space in English Royal Palaces c. 1160–c. 1547: A Study in Access Analysis and Imagery," *Medieval Archaeology* 47, no. 1 (2003), pp. 131–165.
12. Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 61.
13. Richardson, "Gender and Space," pp. 131–165.
14. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 163.
15. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 136.
16. Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 50; Joanna Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens, English Queenship, 1445–1503* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 226–229, 244–250; Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*: *Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 67.
17. Molly Martin, "Castles and the Architecture of Gender in Malory's 'The Knight of the Cart,'" *Arthuriana* 22, no. 2 (2012), p. 40.
18. Richardson, "Gender and Space," pp. 138, 163.
19. Richardson, "Gender and Space," pp. 140–143, on p. 163.
20. The husband was similarly bound. The "conjugal debt" is based on St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 7:5. Any sense of equality that this might suggest, however, is lost when considered within the context of the hierarchies of power that existed between husband and wife. E.g., the gendered active/passive binary required a man to "render the debt to his wife not only when she expressly seeks it, but also when she appears to desire it by signs. However, the same is not judged concerning a man's desire," John of Friburg cited in Jacqueline Murray, "Hiding Behind the Universal Man: Male Sexuality in the Middle Ages," in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, eds. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), p. 131. This inequality is also painfully clear in the state and church law codes allowing violence in marriage as an appropriate form of discipline that could be used against

recalcitrant wives. Blackstone states that a husband could use violence "lawfully and reasonably," and that he could "beat his wife severely with scourges and sticks" if the need arose. Blackstone, *Commentaries*, Bk I, Ch. 15, p. 432. The obligation of conjugal debt, when coupled with the legal entitlement to beat one's wife, meant that forced intercourse within marriage was a right; the crime of rape within marriage was not conceived of in the Middle Ages.

21. In both Galen and Aristotle, which were very influential in medieval thought, the mother's contribution to procreation was thought to be considerably less than the father's. In Aristotle, the mother was reduced to providing the passive "matter" while the father contributed not only the "form" but also the active "seed" that was the essence of conception, the mother specifically playing no part in conception. Galen, and particularly his medieval interpreters, identified "female sperm" and thereby granted women a role in conception although "the preeminence of the male seed was virtually unquestioned." Claude Thomasset "the Nature of Woman," in Christine Klapisch-Zuber (ed.), *History of Women in the West, vol. 2, Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 57. See also Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*: *An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 38–49.

22. Richardson, "Gender and Space," pp. 163, 139, 143.

23. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 143.

24. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 148.

25. Even if women actually built their own castles, the architectural norms of the time reflected a patriarchal plan of female segregation (Gilchrist, "Medieval Bodies," p. 53). Women householders also followed the practice of limiting, or even excluding, low-ranking women from the service population. E.g., in the establishment of Eleanor of Castile (Edward I's first wife) fewer than 10 % of the identifiable household members were women, and in the household of Joan de Valence the washerwoman is the only identifiable woman in a staff numbering at least eighty five (Woolgar, *The Great Household*. pp. 34, 8). This practice was specifically misogynistic. Women were considered to be a sexual threat to the male service population; they were one of the "three scourges" to be sought out and removed, according to the nightly audits of the royal household of Edward II (Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 35).

26. Depth refers to architectural steps from a given point in the public space and permeability to the number of entry points. A distributed route refers to more than one access route. Richardson, "Gender and Space," pp. 131–133.

27. Benz St John, *Three Medieval Queens*. See particularly "The Household," pp. 65–72.

28. Benz St John cites Eleanor of Castile and Margaret of France as two such examples, *Three Medieval Queens*, p. 68.
29. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 164.
30. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 164.
31. Benz St John, *Three Medieval Queens*, p. 69.
32. Gilchrist, "Medieval Bodies," p. 56.
33. Gilchrist, "Medieval Bodies," p. 57.
34. See also Chapter 2.
35. The northern *Octavian*, a mid-fourteenth-century Middle English tail rhyme romance. All references refer to "Octavian," in *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour or Artois, Sir Tryamour*, ed. Harriet Hudson (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996). All references referring to Geoffrey Chaucer, "Man of Law's Tale" are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, F. N. Robinson (ed.), 3rd ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 87–104. *Sir Tryamour* is a late fourteenth-century Middle English tail rhyme romance. All references refer to "Sir Tryamour" in Hudson, *Four Middle English Romances*.
36. Not all the husbands in the tales discussed are kings. I use the term for convenience. There are also emperors, a sultan, and a marquis, and of course Troilus is a prince.
37. After a period of seclusion within the female-only space of the lying-in chamber, the mother attends church for the first time; she is ritually cleansed of all impurities associated with childbirth and welcomed back into the community. Angela Florschuetz, "Women's Secrets: Childbirth, Pollution, and Purification in Northern Octavian," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 30 (2008), pp. 235–268.
38. As happens in many tales of falsely accused queens. See also Chapter 2.
39. All references refer to Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 137–152 (see Chap. 1, n. 3).
40. Curiosity is a trait that was censured in women. In this case, the husband's curiosity is so extreme and so arbitrary, and Griselda so bound, that the power relation between them is absolute.
41. Some aristocratic widows remarried a number of times: Katherine Neville, Duchess of Norfolk, married four times. Others never remarried: Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, married once and remained a widow for 35 years. In the fifteenth century, 89 out of 162 peeresses did not remarry. The 1436 taxation documents show that of the 34 peerages, 5 were controlled by dowagers. Joel T. Rosenthal, "Fifteenth-Century Widows and Widowhood: Bereavement, Reintegration and Life Choices," in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 33–58. Wealthy widows could also be politically pressured to remarry.

E.g., Edward IV married off two wealthy widows, Maud and Joan Stanhope, to his loyal followers. Rhoda Lange Friedrichs, "Rich Old Ladies Made Poor: The Vulnerability of Women's Property in Late Medieval England," *Medieval Prosopography: History and Collective Biography* 21 (2000), pp. 211–229.

42. All references refer to Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 471–586.
43. The numbers are not quite clear, but it would seem that eight sons are born over a period of perhaps eleven years (pp. 104–105).
44. Although this is also standard medieval practice. See earlier in this chapter, in the discussion of *Octavian*.
45. The tenth son seems to be a manuscript error. According to the counting, and to the French text, the last son should be her eighth.
46. Richardson, "Gender and Space," pp. 131–133.
47. Richardson, "Gender and Space," p. 140.

Architectures of Memory

The previous chapter argued that the spatial practices of English royal palaces from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, as evidenced by trends in the development of architectural spaces, constrained change in feminine narrative trajectories. It found that the overarching weight of static architecture inhibited the spatial practices of women and the narrative identities they inscribed through such practices, thereby reducing them to objects of privacy and enclosure. This chapter continues with the architectural theme, elaborating further on the capacity of space and spatial practices to engage with narrative identities, particularly in relation to horizontal and vertical generational connections and family genealogies. The discussion of the text of *Melusine* in this chapter picks up where the previous chapter left off, in the otherworldly spaces behind the bathroom door. The bathroom is at the core of Melusine's home, her family, and her demesne; it is a space that is carved out through weekly spatial practices of seclusion, through which she hopes to build a new narrative future. This space is connected horizontally with her sisters' spaces, which are themselves co-constitutive of vertical narratives that cross multiple generations. These spaces are elsewhere to the main narrative of the text. They are in places not easily accessed; indeed, they are protected from within by the agentive enclosure of their respective caretakers. Implicated in the production of possible futures, these spaces all link to memories of the past. In their memorial function these spaces echo the "rooms" within the architectural mnemonic, commonly used in the *ars memorativa* of high Middle

Ages Scholasticism. The previous chapter considered the temporalization of space. This chapter explores the spatialization of time in *Melusine's* memory rooms. Another connecting thread thus appears in this complex narrative: between Melusine's maternal genealogy and the predilection for system and order that is so clearly demonstrated in the taxonomy of being discussed in Chapter 1, a divine *ordo* that is presented as an organizing principle in the early pages of the text.

The text of *Melusine* was produced and the story set within the context of a patriarchal social structure. By the time of the composition and dissemination of *Melusine*, cognate lineage reckoning had shifted to agnate, and patrilineage was privileged over matrilineage or any other familial structure. Family histories were moving from oral to written form. Oral histories were often a collective memory of the distaff side,[1] while written histories were more likely to be modeled on the agnate family.[2] This suggests that the gendered roles of men and women in the commitment of collective memory to writing tended in different directions. While oral histories were largely a feminine tradition, a collective memory held within the family, the more masculine mode of written histories eventually produced documents for wider dissemination. In committing to writing historical family details often for the first time, in collating documents, and arranging and ordering them in his own particular way, the husband recreated the family as a textual composition. Indeed, family histories, many of which were at first a private record of and for the patriarchal line,[3] soon became publishable, perhaps under the guise of advice books or in their own right, as celebrations of the family or even the individual.[4] For the upper levels of society, writing histories was highly politicized. Such histories needed to be flexible enough to fit current and hoped-for allegiances as well as allowing for new developments.[5] This is not to say that individual women were not involved in the production of written histories. Some high-ranking women were indeed responsible for such production, and for the same purposes as men: for political elevation, to make good marriages, in competition for inheritances, and so on.[6] Even then, the histories they made were of the patriline. Patrilineage, by definition, effaces the maternal line. A woman might argue a claim for herself through her patrilineage, but this was not likely to succeed before all her brothers' rights had been extinguished. Wars have been fought over feminine "usurpation" of such claims. Most famous, perhaps, is the Empress Matilda. Her father, Henry I of England, publically declared that she was his heir but after his death her succession was not accepted by the barons, the church, or her male cousin, and consequently she was never crowned.

The text of *Melusine* celebrates the matriline and the memory of the debt to mother. The key causal element of the main narrative of the text is a loss of this memory. Memory lingers through the remainder of the text. At key moments in the narrative issues of memory arise. On the borders of the narrative implicit and explicit tests of memory must be faced. The narrative exercises memory in a number of forms. In many places the text evokes the privileged practice of elite medieval learning: *ars memorativa*. The practice of *ars memorativa*, rather than being a simple memory tool, was a practice of reading and understanding, of rumination and meditation, of learning. Mary Carruthers argues that these practices encourage the participant to become active in the process of knowledge production rather than remaining simply a reproducer of known forms.[7] In other words, these practices encourage an ownership of knowledge that suggests the development of a certain kind of subjecthood. Through these mechanisms of memory the text of *Melusine* celebrates the maternal genealogy and thereby affirms both maternal subjecthood and feminine subjecthood more broadly.

It might seem strange that *ars memorativa* sould be used for such a purpose, not only in a romance but also as a defense of women. Certainly *ars memorativa* began as a devotional practice in the monastery in the early thirteenth century, but by the end of the period it had become imbricated with late medieval practices of reading. Paul Saenger has shown that the elite reading practices that emerged in the laity at this time, including silent reading, marked a new intimacy between the text and the self that echoed monastic practice.[8] The one-to-one engagement between reader and text presented a private communicative experience that facilitated the emergence of an individualism that did not exist in the more traditional communal reading situations. This development in reading practice, along with the development of silent reading, linked reading with personal devotion, and from this interaction emerged a hitherto unseen personalization of religious experience in some sectors of the high-ranking laity.[9] Andrew Taylor further demonstrates that, as these reading practices spread, in many cases they took with them the meditative and contemplative approaches of *ars memorativa* that were particularly applicable to the individual devotional study of religious texts.[10] Taylor notes the use of visualization, the composition of "internal topographies," and the process of "building a chamber of the mind" as the most notable elements that were transferred to lay reading practices.[11] Of course only men and women of a certain class and education had access to these learned practices in the lay reading

world. The text of *Melusine*, in its French form, was composed by a cleric for a high-ranking noble. Jean D'Arras and Jean, Duc du Berry, were well within the social and intellectual milieu that would have had access to these privileged reading practices; indeed, the Duc du Berry is well known for his patronage of the arts and arguably most famous for the production of his lavish Book of Hours.[12] Melusine herself is featured in this book in the top right hand corner of the illumination of the labors of the month of March, which shows the Castle of Lusignan. She appears in serpentine form, flying around the turret of the castle.

By the time *Melusine* was translated into English (around 1500), there is ample evidence to suggest that such reading practices were in circulation among the laity in England. *The Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*, translated into English from Latin by Nicholas Love, prior to 1410, includes instructions for deep meditative reading practices including visualization.[13] The *Talking of the Love of God*, found in the Vernon Manuscript (circa. 1400) also includes reading instructions.[14] Household documentation shows that Cecily, Duchess of York (1415–1495), and a generation later Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509) practiced private and public devotions that revolved around books and reading, with reading and meditation presented as almost synonymous: "As for medytacyon she had dyuers bokes in Frensshe wherwith she wolde occupy herselfe whan she was wery of prayer."[15] Taylor finds further evidence of meditative reading practices in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscript glosses and in the underlinings and marginal jottings in devotional manuals.[16] This suggests that the English audience of *Melusine* was operating within a culture that was aware of these meditative reading practices—whether or not they practiced them on an individual basis—and such an awareness would inform their understanding of the memory-making functions that are evident in the text.

This chapter is about memory, particularly the memory of the maternal genealogy. It is presented in three parts. The first section offers a short excursus into *ars memorativa* both in order to illuminate a small number of its techniques and to establish how it constructs subjecthood. The second section turns to the text, to reflect upon the lapses of memory that present direct challenges to maternal subjecthood and create a situation that launches the rest of the narrative. The specific consequences of these lapses, in the form of a series of memorial spaces, comprise the third section. The chapter closes with a consideration of some of the ways in which the text engages the audience in thinking about the broader implications of active memory work.

Ars Memorativa

In her classic work, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Mary Carruthers examines the role and various practices of memory-making in medieval scholarship. Carruthers presents extensive and convincing evidence that the medieval scholar was in fact a subject of knowledge: not just a reproducer, but a producer of knowledge. While an extensive and exact memory was requisite, the practices of *ars memorativa* required much more. The medieval art of memory was based upon methods found in classical philosophy that were reworked in the thirteenth century. Carruthers nominates 1240 as the time when "memory became an art again."[17]

The art of memory is primarily a spatial conception, predominantly—but not exclusively—based upon visual configurations. The art depends upon an orderly arrangement of place locations, each location being a memory store.[18] Carruthers makes reference to a number of systems of order but gives predominance to the architectural mnemonic based on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* of Tully (pseudo-Cicero, 86-82BCE),[19] refined by Albertus Magnus and commended by his pupil Thomas Aquinas in the second part of the *Summa Theologica* (the first part of the *Summa* is a traditional exemplar of the processes of Scholastic thought).[20] The architectural mnemonic as described by Carruthers is a system of places, with memory images arranged therein. Tully uses Roman architecture to describe the arrangement of places. They are like rooms in a house, recesses, arches, and spaces between columns.[21] Quintilian refers to a spacious house with an orderly system of many rooms,[22] each room having relevant markers as required.[23] Similarly, Albertus speaks of walking through one's memory. He refers to the system of memory as a meadowland or heath, a hospice, a church, and, like Tully, the spaces between columns.[24] These spatial metaphors indicate a certain flow between locations. There are spatial demarcations, but they are not irrevocably closed. The spatial metaphors also indicate the potential for the architectural mnemonic to move beyond the two-dimensional.

In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* each location is furnished with a wax tablet. Before the memory itself is impressed, however, each wax tablet must be identifiable by its unique background. A system of similar but distinguishable backgrounds is used throughout, to allow the same memory system to be employed for any number of projects; each wax tablet may be erased, while the tablet and the background remain for repeated use.[25] Memory images are consciously made through the operation of the three

"faculties": imagination, cogitation, and existing memory.[26] While the images themselves are most commonly visual, the other senses are used to add texture. Further, it is most important that the memory images invoke an emotional response. Carruthers postulates that the many vivid medieval images that shock—even disgust—the modern reader are in fact invaluable memory cues.[27] The memory images should also be temporally sensitive. They make present, or "re-present," the past by making appropriate associative connections to a personally recognizable past. Carruthers refers to the memory images as a "re-enactment" of experience, with all its affective and temporal elements.[28] To effectively invoke this "re-enactment" the memory image must engage with the individual's own historical, emotional, and sensory past.

A characteristic of all medieval memory training is the recommendation to choose and adapt memory images to suit one's own purposes and preferences. This emphasis on personal engagement is consistent with the higher value placed upon memory for things over memory for words. As stated by Petrarch in a letter to Boccaccio in 1359: "I much prefer that my style be my own, uncultivated and rude, but made to fit, as a garment, to the measure of my mind, rather than to someone else's."[29] Memory for things—*memoria ad res*—is the memory of the gist, or substance of the piece, including perhaps the most important terms, without necessarily a word-for-word rote memorization. Even when one knows the words exactly, the capacity to manipulate the material is evidence not only of recollection but also of composition.[30] According to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, memory for words should be used by children, and by adults it should be used only for specific poetic extracts or as a mental regimen in support of one's memory for things.[31]

Each of the memory images has a dual purpose. In addition to providing information,[32] the images operate as meditative sites. Hugh of St. Victor in *De arca Noe mystica*[33] explains what the images mean to him but adds that these meanings, or "moralizations," stand only as examples of possible engagements. He says:

> We have said these things about the configuration of our Ark, so that for whoever wishes to gaze mentally [*intueri*] upon the decoration of the house of the Lord and His wonders (of which there is no fixed number), this may sometimes stimulate his emotions [*affectus*] by way of example.[34]

The memory images do not represent a fixed or universal meaning. They are memory cues, which operate associatively in one's own processes of

remembering as reminiscence. Associative cues, when ruminated upon, can provide not only the possibility of cross-referencing to other memory locations but also a place for *collation*—a drawing together of diverse material—a process which itself has interpretive potential. Further, *meditatio* with the aid of the sub-vocal murmur, or rumination, was considered to be as much a physiological process as a psychological one. Carruthers notes the common use of metaphors of eating for reading, perhaps the most familiar being the two examples in the Bible each of which describes a prophet being offered a book to eat (Ezekiel 3:3 and Revelation 10:9–11).[35] Carruthers also mentions Hugh of St. Victor who refers to the forest of Scripture "whose ideas [*sententias*] like so many sweetest fruits, we pick as we read and chew [*ruminamus*] as we consider them" (pp. 164–165). This process of consumption as internalization is articulated by Gregory the Great as "[w]e ought to transform what we read into our very selves"[36] and by Petrarch as "I swallowed as a boy what I would ruminate upon as an older man."[37]

This kind of activity—the turning over of the text in one's mind, making it one's own, reproducing it in one's own words in such a way that even one's own self is not sure if it is one's own or another's—suggests a level of internalization which marks the reproduction as composition rather than recollection. *Memoria* contextualizes the subject within personal history: the individual fashions personal memory images, arrangement of places, and connections, within an affective and temporal framework. Originality and creativity were, according to Carruthers, an integral part of medieval scholarship, but the degree of their presence has been veiled by discursive difference. Therefore, one fashions oneself into a subject of memory, and according to Bernardo Gui, a contemporary of Thomas Aquinas, memory is synonymous with knowledge:

> [Thomas's] memory was extremely rich and retentive: whatever he had once read and grasped he never forgot; it was as if knowledge were ever increasing in his soul as page is added to page in the writing of a book.[38]

The subjecthood produced by these practices is also affected by the context in which it developed. The monastic world was necessarily masculine and hierarchical. The learned community within this world was defined by specific boundaries. Characteristics which made one the member of the group were precisely delineated, as were characteristics that distinguish others from the group.[39] Full membership of the elite group to which Carruthers refers required the capacity of memory for things. To have only

the less prestigious memory for words positioned one at the elementary intellectual level of the child-scholar. The capacity of memory for things, as argued above, produced and was productive of the subject. To be a legitimate individual within the group one had to conform to a particular practice that was itself one of individuation. While others within the monastery largely remained positioned as cogs in the wheel of feudal order, it was this elite group of individuals who became subjects of knowledge. Thus we arrive at the inevitable paradox in the production of knowledge: knowledge, despite its transhistorical status as universal, is subjectively produced and therefore always necessarily partial.

The memorial function of the text of *Melusine* echoes the techniques of *ars memorativa* in many ways. The maternal genealogy is inscribed in images, in writing, and in spatial practices in a series of rooms that align with Carruthers' description of the architectural mnemonic, but the women who are custodians of this memory are not separate from the story. They are all living the story and its consequences at the time of its telling. The knowledge they offer is fully embodied, embedded within their cyclical practices of living. Moreover, all participants, whether they are custodians or seekers of knowledge, are affected bodily by the processes of memorialization and rumination and the consequences that flow from these experiences. There are significant and long-term effects for everyone who comes into contact with these memorializations. In other words, in this text there is no sanitary separation to depersonalize or universalize the subject of knowledge or the knowledge produced.

FORGETTING AND OTHER FAILURES OF MEMORY

Before turning to the memory spaces of the text, it is useful to consider the conditions under which such spaces arose. They were implemented by Pressine, the mother, because of failures of memory in relation to herself. In one of the prefatory episodes Pressine and Elynas meet and marry. Pressine agrees to marry only on the condition of the taboo. This taboo protects for herself a particular space, her private place. Not only is this taboo broken by her husband, but her daughters also behave in a way that relegates her subjecthood. These behaviors, and the effects they have on Pressine as a woman and a mother, precipitate the particular memorial functions that she institutes.

The delineation of Pressine's individual space–time begins with the negotiations of her own love relation. The taboo Pressine places upon Elynas is a mechanism to preserve her own private place within the

love relation, similar to that which Melusine places upon Raimondin.[40] Pressine's private place is also akin to Melusine's in that it is explicitly material. Indeed, it is perhaps the most excessively material: the birthing chamber. It is also the place of memory-making, the memory of genealogy that is inseparable from the bodies of women.

Pressine reserves for herself the moment of physical reproduction. Her request for privacy at such a time is not unreasonably onerous, nor even an oddity.[41] In the medieval imagination childbirth is a particular space–time that is explicitly female: midwives rather than surgeons are in control[42] and only women are present.[43] Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, medieval lore gives women one month to convalesce from childbirth.[44] It is a time in which the physical procreative powers of women are most evident, but this power is brought into sharp relief by the simultaneous specter of death that looms at the event.[45] It is, therefore, an event anticipated with a mixture of pleasure and fear and imbued with superstition. Multiple births are suggestive of adultery[46] or, in romance, monstrosity,[47] and midwives were often considered to be witches, especially if a birth did not turn out well.[48] Monstrous and fantastic associations with this mysterious process are not surprising, given that it was largely beyond attempts at well-meaning intervention and completely beyond the gaze of the excluded and less evidently potent male.

The exclusion of the father from the birthing chamber is significant because the time of childbirth is the moment when Pressine, in the birth of her daughters, actualizes her own maternal lineage within a patriarchal world that privileges the patriline. Pressine preserves for herself this particular space-time to establish a relationship between herself and her daughters. Indeed, the mechanism of the taboo heightens the significance of this place as a father-free space. The taboo grants primacy to this private place—to this particular space at this particular time. As such it symbolizes the mother-daughter relationship, celebrating its importance, and thereby explicitly acknowledging generational difference between mother and daughters. Despite his promise, however, and despite the cultural inappropriateness of such a move,[49] Elynas asserts his patriarchal right as husband and father and enters the private space, thereby breaking the taboo. The nakedness of his daughters highlights his act as an abusive assertion of masculine power and possession,[50] whatever might be the apparent innocence of his pleasure on the occasion ("he said in this manere: 'god blesse the moder & the doughters', & toke of them grette Ioye" *Melusine*, p. 11, l. 35–p. 12, l. 2). Pressine's reaction is to take her daughters and leave the space which patriarchy disallows.

Pressine and Elynas's life together is underpinned by the childbirth taboo and ultimately undermined by masculine forgetting: it comes to an end because of a failure of memory. The daughters, on the other hand, come to grief with their mother not because they simply forget but because they presume to know. Consequently (and perhaps inadvertently) they objectify their mother through a denial of generational and ontological difference.

The relationship between Pressine and Melusine is usually read as one mediated by their relations with a man, Elynas: Pressine's husband and Melusine's father. The most common reading of the three daughters' fates at the hands of their mother is that she avenges Elynas.[51] Certainly Pressine is angry about the daughters' enforced enclosure of their father. Indeed, the enclosure of Elynas is traditionally read by critics as patricide.[52] However, if the unwelcome breach of another's self-enclosure is an act of appropriation of the agency of that closure, then the behavior of Elynas and Raimondin in breaking their respective taboos can be understood as the attempted enclosure of their wives. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that these actions are denominated from the beginning of the tale as betrayals,[53] they do not attract the same attention from critics as the apparently more abhorrent crime of the enforced enclosure of Elynas by his daughters.[54] Moreover, the following extract suggests that Pressine's discomposure is brought about not by an offense against the father, to which there appears to be a heightened critical sensibility, but by an offense against herself, the mother, to which there is remarkably little critical sensibility.[55]

> 'Ha/ha/alas!' said theire moder Pressyne to them/'how durst you so doo/ euyl herted doughters, & without pyte /ye haue not doon wel, whan he that begat you on my body ye haue so shamfully punysshed by your proude courage. *For it was he of whom I toke all the playsaunce that I had in this mortall world, whiche ye haue taken fro me.* Therfore, knowe ye wel that I shall punyssh you of the meryte aftir youre deserte' (My emphasis, p. 14, l. 27–p. 15, l. 3)

Pressine's speech notes that the daughters transgress against both father and mother, but if we look closely, we can see that a causal relationship moves from the second sentence of the excerpt shown above: "For it was he…." The conjunctions "For" and "therfore" designate the frame of the cause. The primary element in the causal relation—the reason for Pressine's distress—is, therefore, that they take from her last earthly pleasure. Pressine punishes her daughters not for an offense against their father but for their offense against herself.

What constitutes Pressine's last earthly pleasure in her relation with Elynas remains unstated, but it can be inferred. We are told that after the departure of Pressine from Albany, Elynas "dede none other thinge, but compleyned & sighed, & made grette playntes & piteous lamentations for loue of Pressyne his wyf, whiche he louyd of lawfull loue" (p. 12, ll. 16–19). After seven years the people say he is "assoted" (p. 12, l. 20), and they hand over the government to Elynas's son, who, despite his earlier subterfuge, rules kindly and well.[56] Elynas continues in this pitiable state for another eight years. Meanwhile on Avalon, every morning Pressine takes her daughters to a high mountain, from where they can see into the land of Albany. Pressine talks to her daughters of this distant land, "waymentyng & sore wepyng" all the while (p. 13, l. 8). Elynas and Pressine both continue their ritual of mourning every day for fifteen years. Pressine and Elynas suffer in parallel worlds, but the full meaning of this suffering can only be realized within the context of another space–time, to which Melusine and her sisters have no access. It is the memory of that place in the past—the space–time of their love relation—that gives meaning to their present suffering. When they were together, Pressine and Elynas had "grette Ioye" in the sight of one another, and now despite their suffering Pressine can still see him every morning from the mountaintop. The "grete myserye without ende" to which Pressine refers is not, as Melusine supposes, the material condition of their life on Avalon. Pressine's misery is her own life without Elynas, but she can still glean one last earthly pleasure in seeing him and knowing that they mourn together.

Melusine's mistake begins as an innocuous misinterpretation but soon escalates to misjudged action.[57] From the top of the mountain Pressine "sawe ynogh the land of Albany" (p. 13, ll. 6–7). Her gaze is informed by the privileged knowledge of her own history: Pressine sees with the eye of the mind.[58] Melusine, who has no privileged knowledge, sees only with the bodily eye, and, not seeing enough, insists upon a more detailed description: "She tourned the talke of her moder, & demanded of her the commodytees of the land/the name of the Cites, tounes, & Castels of Albanye" (p. 13, ll. 22–25). In a later private conversation with her sisters, Melusine recounts her mother's words with slight but significant variations. Pressine has described the loss of their life in Albany in terms of the loss of "wele & honour" (p. 13, l. 10), but Melusine translates "wele" into "so wel at ease" (p. 13, ll. 13–32) and exaggerates "honour" as "so grete worship" (p. 13, ll. 31–32). Melusine presumes to know her mother's full meaning, but in taking her mother's words literally, she betrays

a superficial understanding that is suggestive of Carruthers' memory for words rather than the more penetrating engagement pertaining to a memory for things. Melusine's presumption leads to her changing her mother's words and thereby revealing her own desire. During this private conversation the sisters are unable to look at Albany for themselves, as they have descended from the mountain and the human world is no longer in view. Melusine can no longer point to it but only to its absence, which is the misery in which they now live: "loke and behold we the myserye" (p. 13, ll. 29–30). Avalon is nowhere physically described, but the adjoining hill which they visit every day is described as the "fflorysshed" hill: the hill of flowers. This does not suggest a miserable physical existence. Melusine's misery, therefore, can only refer to a lack.

Melusine presumes, just as Raimondin does later in the tale with respect to Melusine herself. She pretends to knowledge, but she sees with the eye of the body. She has memory not even for words, and she has developed a desire to control, contain, and consume. Melusine desires to reclaim that which she perceives to be lost to her: a land full of "commodytees" with numerous cities, towns, and castles, in which she should be living with all the material luxuries of wealth and social status that she believes are her due. She wishes to consume the distance between herself and these luxuries and then to consume those luxuries once she has arrived. She knows that this cannot be, so instead she consumes the person who represents both: that which she desires, and her loss of it. Melusine's desire is invoked by a particular kind of look that only sees that which she does not have. She does not see Elynas's distress; instead, she sees the luxury in which he lives. The sisters also disproportionately privilege the gaze: they do not want simply to avenge their mother, but they all have a "grette desyre to see" (p. 14, l. 15) that she is avenged. Elynas is contained by their gaze even before he is physically "closed or shett" (p. 14, ll. 18–19) in the mountain.[59]

When Melusine justifies her imprisonment of Elynas to her mother as an act of vengeance on her mother's behalf, she adds the insult of objectification to the injury of taking from Pressine her final earthly pleasure. In not consulting her mother she disallows the possibility that her mother's will might be different from her own; she denies Pressine's uniqueness in the amorous exchange (this uniqueness being based upon the face-to-face relation as noted in Chapter 2). She thereby elides her mother's difference, as another woman and as a lover. Further, in taking the act of vengeance upon herself in her mother's name she simultaneously disallows generational difference

and constructs her mother as passive, unable to enact her own will. Thus Melusine denies her mother's subjecthood as a woman, a mother, and a participant in a private love relation; she reduces her to passive object-hood.[60] Melusine presumes that her parents' relation is knowable, that her mother's desire is knowable, and that she, Melusine, is able to know and can act in her mother's stead. The problematizing of her presumption as error, and her consequent destiny, position the love relation as privileged. Moreover, the problematizing of Melusine's presumption also positions Pressine as a feminine subject in a relationship of difference, not only with Elynas but also with Melusine and her sisters.

Melusine, her sisters, and her father are all guilty of failing to acknowl-edge the subjecthood of Pressine. They betray her trust, invade her space, undermine her joy, and usurp her agency. All these acts are mistakes; they are all looking elsewhere, thinking of other things, not consider-ing Pressine, or remembering their promises to her. The consequences for Pressine, however, are severe. In addition to the specific suffering each offense inflicts upon her, each act negates her subjecthood. These acts elide the memory of the mother and of difference between women. In other words, these are problems of patriarchal memory. The memo-rial function of patrilineage is to remember the paternal line. It remem-bers the father (not the mother), and it acknowledges difference between father and son (not mother and daughter). Elynas's and Melusine's acts of forgetting become the causal elements that underpin the main nar-rative of the text: they set in train a series of events that even Pressine cannot predict.

Pressine's response to these lapses in memory is to establish a series of spaces of memory, one for each offender. These spaces not only re-inscribe the maternal genealogy; they also institute memorial and meditative prac-tices through which the making of knowledge is reconfigured. These spaces echo both the meditative practice and the knowledge production of *ars memorativa*. They also variously locate the family in its historical lin-eage and its current society, as well as projecting potential trajectories for its future place in the world. These spaces invite an external participant, a male member of the lineage, to participate in some way in the making of memory and knowledge. They offer a space of negotiation that opens up a vertical relationship with time: an opportunity to take new meanings from the past and to redirect, anticipate, and actualize different versions of the future.

ARCHITECTURES OF MEMORY

Pressine institutes a series of spaces of memory, each of which exists liminally to the action of the main narrative. They are on the threshold of alterior space, that world of ontological otherness, of different ways of living, of different histories and different futures, including that of the maternal genealogy. While in the space of patrilineal history the materiality of the maternal is elided, within the space of the maternal genealogy the material and the spiritual comfortably co-exist. The dichotomizing of mind and body (of the abstract and the concrete) is not necessary because within matrilineage the memory of the body does not disturb the link between mother and child (as it does between father and child). Transcending materiality is not required. Thus we find that in the liminal world of Pressine's memorial spaces the abstract and the concrete are not divided. This section examines the feminine otherworld: that world which closes out the masculine, unless, and until, he succeeds in a carefully negotiated entry. Through the mechanisms of the taboos instigated by Pressine a feminine space–time is established in these spaces. The feminine history, or the maternal genealogy, is constructed by Pressine and handed down to her daughters. The system she creates is a physical manifestation of the architectural mnemonic of *ars memorativa*: it is a series of rooms, each room containing as its immutable background a depiction of the family history upon which the daughters inscribe their own lives. The taboos instigated by Pressine preserve memory and also space; it is the space–time of this maternal heritage that provides the daughters with the capacity to create their own homes and also the mechanisms to preserve control of the thresholds of their own bodily spaces.

All the spaces are introduced before the main narrative of *Melusine* begins and remain located in liminal spaces on the borders of that narrative. Melior's space frames the narrative, appearing before the main narrative begins and then in an epilogue, at some unidentified future time beyond the main narrative. Melusine's taboo kick-starts the main narrative, and her memorial space explodes onto the on-text narrative in the climactic scene where Raimondin spies on her in the bath. Even though the Melusine's weekly retreats to her bathroom occur within the frame of her marriage to Raimondin and are therefore located within the temporal range of human time in the main narrative, they occur in their weekly progression largely off text. The other two spaces, Elynas's tomb and Palayne's cave, are otherworldly places that do not form key elements in

the narrative progression. Indeed the function of all these spaces reaches beyond the on-text narrative. The spaces of the three sisters present a series of temporally horizontal spaces within one generation. Moreover, the spaces of Melior and Palatyne and Elynas's tomb are also temporally vertical, reaching back into the past and forward into the future. The temporal range of existence of Elynas's tomb, Melior's Castle, and Palatyne's cave is open-ended.

Elynas's Tomb

By definition a tomb has a memorial function: memorializing the life of the deceased. This tomb tells the story of Elynas's life in writing. It also depicts the processes of reading, of contemplation, and of memory-making. The tomb is lavish, rich in "precyous stones and other Jewellis" (p. 17, l. 6). At the foot of the tomb stands an alabaster statue holding a tablet upon which is written the family history. In the description of the tomb at the beginning of the tale the statue is of Elynas,[61] presenting a timeless and poignant image of him forever reading his own story of the betrayal of his wife and the vengeance enacted upon him by his daughters. The tomb therefore actualizes many layers of memorial function. Not only does the textual representation of their story on the tablet offer a meditative opportunity for anyone reading it, but the statue also portrays a visual image of Elynas in the endless act of remembering. His posture of reading is permanent; his meditative contemplation never-ending. The tomb is permanently illuminated by "grett & highe Candelstykes of fyn gold, and lampes & torches whiche brennen both day & nyght continuelly" (ll. 7–9), as though to facilitate Elynas's continual process of reading. This scene is a memorial to Elynas's punishment and grief, but it also offers an opportunity to ruminate upon that particular aspect of the history from Elynas's point of view.

Curiously, however, at the end of the tale when Geoffrey succeeds in finding the tomb, the alabaster statue holding the tablet is of Pressine. This changes the memorial function. In this case Pressine stands in a power relation over Elynas, vertical and alert, well above the prostrate Elynas within the sarcophagus. She is both protector and accuser. Holding the tablet with their story inscribed upon it, she holds the evidence of his betrayal in her hands for all to see. The focus of the meditative function shifts from the personal introspection of the guilty Elynas to the quietly defiant, upright posture of the offended party. The image as a whole is still

a meditative object for the onlooker, but of a different sort. The perspective has become explicitly that of Pressine, reflecting her version of events onto the world. In this version, the perspective is outward looking, offering the story to the world.

The second version of the tale occurs after Melusine is betrayed by Raimondin and the family is consequently destined to fall into decline. Moreover, in the second version the tale is recounted in more detail. The single tablet in the earlier version transforms into many, with numerous chapters, and Geoffrey spends a considerable time "beholding & seeyng" (p. 328, l. 22) both the tablets and "the beaute of the place" (l. 23). When this additional historical detail is coupled with the statue of Pressine presiding, the effect is a foregrounding of the memorial function of the tomb and a backgrounding of the contemplative function. It is no longer enough for Elynas to contemplate the loss of his wife and daughters. Now Pressine takes the lead as the family moves into stormy waters for the next generations. In this way the memorial function takes on a forward-looking perspective. It constructs a potential narrative trajectory into the future the moment it reveals itself to Geoffrey, and it is a narrative trajectory launched by the matriarch, Pressine.

Melior's Sparrowhawk Castle

In Melior's Sparrowhawk Castle the same story is retold but embedded within a different context and aimed at a different viewer. The memorial function is once again multi-layered, and there are also two scenes; but rather than a transformation of the same tableau, in this episode there are two interconnecting rooms that present two different spaces of memory. This episode occurs right at the end of the narrative, projecting a specific narrative future of "grete mischief…decaye" in which the protagonist's descendants for nine generations will be "exilled fro their contrees & fro their honour" (p. 367, ll. 9–12).

The custom of Melior's Sparrowhawk Castle, devised by Pressine, poses the following challenge: if a knight chooses to enter the castle during the feast of St John and succeeds in spending three days and three nights without sleep, then he will be granted any boon he asks of the lady of the castle, excluding only herself. The episode depicts the arrival at the castle of the King of Armenia, a descendant of Melusine's third son Guyon. He comes to the castle because he has heard much of the lady's beauty and intends to marry her, even though he knows that the custom disallows

such a relationship. He is reminded of this condition by the warning of the ancient knight who greets him on arrival, and Melior reiterates it at the end of the episode. During his three-day vigil, the king is offered a series of memorial experiences—visualizations, meditations, walking through rooms with specific informational content—that echo the architectural mnemonic of *ars memorativa*. This king's final actions will not be prompted by impulse, as were his ancestors': Elynas momentarily forgets his promise, Raimondin's rage clouds his judgment and he forgets his promise, and Guyon's joy is entirely self-focused so that his attention is not on the damage he causes.[62] This king is given every opportunity to meditate and reflect upon the narratives of betrayal and upon the link between cause and effect in the outcome of events.

The vigil begins in a "noble hall rychely hanged" (p. 363, l. 26). The first explicitly meditative object he is offered is the sparrowhawk. He is shown "the manere of watching" the sparrowhawk (p. 364, ll. 10–11) and is then left alone in the hall to attempt the challenge.[63] The hall is full of sensual appeal; the luxuriousness of materials, variety of textures, and abundance of "deyntes of meetes" to eat (p. 364, ll. 14–15) evoke a sensory response and could therefore assist in rumination and the formation of memory. There is also danger, however, in that the food, drink, and comfort can induce sleep, as the king himself recognizes. He resists the excessive consumption of food and drink and "kept a good dyete and made non exces" (ll. 16–17), but this also suggests a resistance to the memory-making opportunity that the sensory experience affords. There is also a series of scenes on the walls that provide the opportunity for visual meditations. They are all richly "paynted" and "figured," presenting "noble" histories, with writing beneath in letters of gold that "showed the vnderstanyng" of the images (ll. 23). The verbs "paynted," "figured," and "showed" foreground the producer—a painter or writer—as the one whose "vnderstandyng" of the images is recorded in writing below. The viewer is also presented as active ("looking"), as engaging with the material ("sawe," "beheld"), and even as an interpretive agent ("perceived"). Therefore, while the images and their narrative glosses encode a preferred reading, the agentive text also allows for the active engagement of the viewer. The lesson of the depictions remains implicit. They are offered for the purposes of meditation and contemplation; they are offered as material with which to make new knowledges.

On the third day, the king observes a door "al wyd open" and a "right noble chambre" appears (p. 365, ll. 1–2). The king walks from one room

to another, explicitly echoing Quintilian's house of many rooms. This gesture of movement into a new space, of openness, and of progression to new possibilities continues in the new images found on the walls, which are different in style and content from those already seen in the hall. The sense of unfolding potential is in itself an incentive to strive to stay awake, but there is also an incentive in the narrative of cause and effect that is depicted on the walls of the chamber. Each knight who has attempted the vigil is represented on the walls. The knights who failed are depicted through portraiture, the stasis of their images aligned with capture. Indeed, this is the first time we learn that those who fail the vigil live forever after within the castle. Those who have succeeded (only three) do not have their portraits shown; rather, they are depicted by their shields and arms, symbolizing honor and prowess. The cause-and-effect narrative is not spelt out in words under the text as it is in the earlier images, although the consequential link is plain enough. Moreover, the choice of knightly accoutrements makes associative connections with the king's chivalric persona (he is "yong and fayre" and "in his best age," p. 362, ll. 20, 31), specifically locating him, as a knight, within a context of knightly endeavors. There is also an associative link with memory, as shields and arms were often decorated with markers of family and lineage. These accoutrements locate the king within his lineage, the Lusignan line, as he partakes in a contest of endurance and honor that also requires adherence to the terms of the agreement, a requirement that his forefathers have all failed to fulfill.

The Lusignan line is already in decline as a result of Raimondin breaking the pact. This episode memorializes this history, along with the story of Pressine and Elynas. It also highlights the inevitability of cause and effect and associatively links the king to all these depicted narratives of honor, betrayal, and the failure of memory. Despite the three-day and three-night vigil—viewing the histories provided in the hall and the narratives of the chamber—the king seems to have learnt nothing. Upon succeeding in the vigil he repeatedly claims Melior as his boon, refusing to submit to the agreed terms. Despite the structural supports explicitly provided, he seems devoid of memory, closed to the prospect of new knowledge. Indeed, his knowledge is fixed before he begins the adventure. He knows the terms of the custom of the castle before he goes there, but he is "lecherous and folowyng his wyll" (p. 362, l. 20). He has no intention of letting the custom interfere with his goal: "of the lady he shuld nothing take but herself" (p. 362, l. 34). The king's knowledge is fixed before he begins the adventure; his mind is closed.

The king's refusal to consider Melior's warning is in many ways an old story. Masculine desire overrides feminine knowledge, especially if he has the physical power to impose his will: "neyþer for her wordes, nor for fere that ought shuld hym mysfall, he neuer chaunged his folysh wyll & vnhappy purpos, but wold haue take the lady by manere of vyolens and by force" (p. 367, ll. 14–18). But the king is mistaken. Within *ars memorativa*, memory *is* knowledge. The process of memory-making is a process of meditation and contemplation. It is a process of internalization, of re-making knowledge in one's own form: memory for things (abstract things: ideas, concepts, arguments) rather than memory for words (concrete things). However, the king resists the multi-layered opportunities to produce new knowledges that have been offered to him during the vigil. He does not "watch" the sparrowhawk as instructed, which is surely a signal to meditate also upon the other visual offerings in the room. He gleans nothing new from the narratives on the walls, nor from the portrait room. He has no interest in this experience; his goal is simply to overthrow the custom of the castle. What he misses because he is not paying attention is that the story of the custom of the castle—and the lady who presides over it—is in the wall hangings and portraits of the failed knights. By not "watching," ruminating, and meditating upon what he sees, he does not learn of the power of the lady. His failure is, therefore, a failure of memory; it is a failure to make new knowledge through rumination and contemplation, the processes through which one makes a memory one's own. As a result of his failure of memory–of his closure to new knowledge–he and his line are cursed for a further nine generations.

Melusine's Bathroom

Melusine's bathroom invokes *ars memorativa* obliquely (not explicitly as does Elynas's tomb or Melior's castle). She does not walk through architectural spaces with memorial locations, nor does she have images of history on her walls or written on tablets. Instead, her memory is embodied. It plays out every week in her spatial movement to and from her private place, through a series of architectural spaces made by her to her own design. She lives a memorial practice: her cycle of living is an active meditation on her past, present, and future.

The wetness of the bathroom invokes Avalon, reminding us that Melusine is a watery fée. From the day after her birth Melusine spends the first fifteen years of her life on Avalon. The Isle of Avalon has an extended

literary history, and is not only found in courtly medieval romances. Like
Arthur himself it is found in the earlier "histories" of Gerald of Wales and
Geoffrey of Monmouth. It is surrounded by water and often attributed
with an unlocatable geography, through marshes or mists.[64] It is associated
with magical powers, notably the origin of Arthur's powerful sword and
protective scabbard,[65] and it is a liminal place between life and death, the
final resting place of Arthur.[66] It is also a place of women, often associated
with the magical Morgan, Arthur's kinswoman,[67] and in Marie de France's
Lanval it is to Avalon that Lanval and his fairy lover retreat.[68] By the twelfth
century it is already established as a feminine, watery place, and by the fif-
teenth century, in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*,[69] the Isle of Avalon (and
The Lake) as the home of mysterious and frighteningly powerful women
comes into its own. From the outside world Avalon seems to be a place of
indeterminate closure, but at the same time it is impenetrable. It represents
that which is uncontainable, uncontrollable, and unknowable. It poses a
threat to the masculine ideal of the externally enclosed domestic realm.
In *Melusine* the Isle of Avalon is in the same tradition. It is unlocatable:
"Aualon, that was named the yle lost, bycause that all had a man be there
many tymes/yet shuld not he conne retourne thither hymself alone/but
byhapp & grett auenture" (p. 12, l. 32–p. 13, l. 1). It is outside the real
world, a place "of the Nymphes & of the fairees" (p. 15, ll. 11–12). And
it is a feminine place, ruled by Pressine's "sustir & felow, my lady of the
yle lost" (p. 12, ll. 8–9). In *Melusine*, however, its unknowability is not
interpreted as a threat; rather, it holds a legitimate position in the taxon-
omy of being described in the Intrinsic Prologue of the text (as discussed
in Chapter 1), as the place of the fairy marvelous, and Pressine's flight
there after Elynas's betrayal positions Avalon as a retreat from patriarchal
hegemony.

In her bathroom, Melusine relives aspects of her Avalonian life.

> Melusyne…was within a grete bathe of marbel stone, where were steppis
> to mounte in it, and was wel XV foot of length; and therein she bathed
> herself…melusyne within the bathe vnto her nauell, in fourme of a woman
> kymbyng her heere, and fro the nauel dounward in lyknes of a grete serpent,
> the tayll as grete & thykk as a barell, and so long it was the she made it to
> touche oftymes, while that raymondyn beheld her, the rouf of the chambre
> that was right hye. (p. 296, l. 22–p. 297, l. 7)

The size of the bath is generous, providing ample space for a watery
fée to play. Such a bath in medieval times would have needed a direct

source of water. A watery connection with streams or rivers suggests that Melusine, while in the bath, is ultimately uncontainable, distinctively fluid. The potential for Melusine to travel through water is further implied by her mermaiden form, despite its enormity. Indeed, the size of the tail, in both breadth and length, is another pointer to extravagance and luxury.[70] Similar to Avalon, the bathroom is therefore a place of indeterminate closure from within. It is also impenetrable from without. For twenty years Raimondin has not attempted to approach it: "wete it wel he had neuer be tofore that tyme so ferre thitherward" (p. 296, ll. 17–18). When he finally does, he is faced with "a doore of yron thikk & strong" (p. 296, l. 16). Melusine's bathroom is, therefore, a place of sensuality and pleasure and also of retirement from the world.

At the same time, however, the sensory valence of the bathroom is multi-layered. Melusine in the bath is a picture of abundance, and yet, while the bathroom itself is magnificent and the bath huge and handsome, Melusine's mermaid form is constrained. Not only is she too large for the bath, overflowing its edges in wet luxuriousness, she barely fits within the room itself, as her tail touches the high ceiling. Her excess is pushing at the limits of a space not quite big enough. As discussed in Chapter 3, the bathroom is an autonomous space, a private place of material pleasure and reconstitution of the self; nevertheless, there remains a tension between excess and constraint. Moreover, the precise requirement of weekly retirement introduces a disciplinary element to her cycle of life that did not exist in her Avalonian life. This controlling mechanism is a reminder of her earlier intemperate excess, her transgressive coveting of Elynas's material riches. The sense of contained excess is therefore appropriate as an embodiment of her error and its corrective, the weekly requirement of repetition being an iterative reminder that pleasure and luxury can only have meaning within the context of purpose and order. In the not unbounded excesses of Melusine's watery frolic, she re-enacts her own historical, emotional, and sensory past: her errors and her punishment, her pleasures and her regrets. The cycle of her life plays out these memories in the weekly discipline of inescapable repetition.

Even though there are no images of historical narratives in the bathroom to meditate upon, as there are in Elynas's tomb or Melior's castle, its memory function works perfectly and not only for Melusine. As soon as Raimondin makes the hole in the door and spies on Melusine in the bath, as soon as he sees this extraordinary scene, the memory of his privileged knowledge flows over his body:

> And when Raymondyn perceyued it, wete it wel that he was right dolaunt
> and sorowful & not without cause, and coude neuer hold hys tonge, but
> he said, 'My swete loue, now haue I betrayed you, & haue falsed my
> couenaunt…and haue forsworne myself toward you.' Raymondin thenne
> was smyten to the herte with such sorow & dystresse that vnnethe he coude
> speke / and pensefull with a heuy contenaunce retourned hastly toward hys
> chamber. (p. 297, ll. 7–16)

Raimondin has been driven to look by "yre and Jalousy" (p. 296, l. 13),
a bodily response that has him moving restlessly from room to room. His
brother, the Erle of Forests, has argued that Melusine's weekly absences
pointed to either adultery, or that she was a fairy doing penance. When
Raimondin looks, he does not see adultery or a monstrous being doing
penance. He does not acknowledge the bathroom at all. He sees only his
own betrayal. His reaction is expressed bodily: "coude neuer hold hys
tonge," "was smyten to the herte," "vnnethe he coude speke," and "with
a heuy contenaunce." Moreover, the knowledge that he makes is privi-
leged and individualized; it is personal to him. It can only be made within
the context of his private relationship with Melusine and his knowledge of
the pact. Raimondin sees with the eyes of the mind, and he has memory
for things rather than words. His understanding goes beyond the literal.
He makes his own knowledge informed by an accurate memory. Unlike
the king in Melior's Sparrowhawk Castle, who refuses to remain open to
new knowledges, and unlike even Elynas, who blithely enters Pressine's
birthing chamber, Raimondin understands instantly the full implications
of what he has done. His failure of memory is momentary, his recollection
instantaneous.

Melusine's bathroom therefore has both meditative and memorial func-
tions in relation to Melusine and Raimondin. Memory repeats in a weekly
cycle: Melusine's weekly withdrawal from society and family is also tacitly
acknowledged by Raimondin for more than twenty years. The habituation
of this practice leaves little room of forgetting—it is literally inscribed in
physical spatial practice. Moreover, memory works closely through the
body. Melusine's bathing in an embodied meditative function, a literal
playing out of her penance each week in a tension of excess held forever
in check. Raimondin too experiences an embodied memory—memory as
a bodily response.

There is one final gesture to *ars memorativa* in this episode. The wave
of realization that floods across Raimondin has him running back to his

chamber to retrieve some wax, which he then uses to stop the hole in the door. In *ars memorativa*, each memory cell contains a wax tablet and the memory is inscribed upon its surface. The background of the cell and the overarching system that contains it remain unchanged, but the details of the memory on the wax tablet can be erased. The memory system is therefore a mixture of the mutable and immutable. Wax is the mutable substance that allows change on the surface, but the infrastructure of the mnemonic remains unchanged. Raimondin tries to change the surface of memory by stopping the hole with wax, but his betrayal is marked in the immutable surface of the iron door. His betrayal is memorialized in the architectural infrastructure; it is encoded in the system; it is unchangeable and unchanging.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The privileged mechanisms of memory and the production of knowledge—*ars memorativa*—resonate throughout these episodes. Pressine uses these mechanisms to actualize her own subjecthood through memorializing the maternal genealogy. She establishes a meditative site for the contemplation of the vertical generational connections that run across her own lineage. She also secures the subjectivities of her daughters by preserving for each of them a private space–time and also by allowing a space for them to negotiate with the masculine. She thereby acknowledges that interactions between the spatialities of individuals is a necessary part of the continual process of the production of subjecthood; indeed, the external interactions are just as important as the sanctity of the private place in the continual replenishment that is the becoming of one's own life story.

Recalling the chiasmus of the amorous exchange discussed in Chapter 2, each of the three sisters protects a space from the masculine, a private place from which she is ready to negotiate a relation with him. These meetings can only occur within the context of these liminal spaces and some form of trial: of endurance, endeavor, or restraint. The access to the histories is therefore inextricably linked to some measure of worth, with the critical final moment involving a test of memory that acknowledges feminine subjecthood. The masculine always, eventually and inevitably, fails this final test. These acts of betrayal occur on the threshold of this liminal space, from which he is then ejected and forever barred. As the historical moment moves forward, the guilt of the perpetrator becomes more explicit. Elynas's betrayal of Pressine occurs in the past of the tale; his is a moment of forgetting, making him

vulnerable to the jealous manipulations of his son from a previous marriage. Raimondin's betrayal of Melusine occurs in the present, and is motivated by his own jealousy, albeit instigated by his brother. The most spectacular and determined betrayal occurs in the final episode of the text, at some unidentified future time. A descendant of Guyon[71] accepts the custom of Sparrowhawk Castle, but all the while he has been determined to take that which is forbidden. Despite repeated warnings and a bitter argument, the king is beaten by unseen assailants and cast out of the castle.

Thus, as in the history of Pressine and Elynas, the masculine continues to fail to negotiate and/or sustain a positive relation with the feminine, and this failure is reflected in the decline of the lineage in patriarchal terms. The tales of each of the three sisters repeat the same family history, but each plays out a different part of its future. The future downfall of their lineage is predicted by Melusine at the time of Raimondin's betrayal, and specifically and repeatedly delineated in the episode of Sparrowhawk Castle. This downfall has an explicit causal relationship with the complete breakdown of relations between the sexes: "And al thoo that shal demande the without cesse, and that wyl not forbere & absteynne them þerof/shalbe infortunate vnto the ix. lynee, and shul be putt from theire presperytees" (p. 16, ll. 8–11). When Pressine instructed Melior, there was no hint that it would be her own descendants who "were not fortunat, but vnhappe in al their actes" (p. 368, ll. 17–18). The episode, and the tale of *Melusine* itself, ends with a note of despair for the patriline, the "noble lynee" being necessarily a reference to Elynas and Raimondin:

> For wete it wel that neuer aftir this faytte he had no hertly joye and regned long tyme, but from day to day fell in decaye by dyuerse maners. And wete it wel that his heyres after his decesse were not fortunat, but vnhappe in al their actes. Here shall I leue to speke of the king of Armanye. For ynough it is knowen that they came of the noble lynee of the king Elynas of Albanye & [Raymondin] of Lusynen. (p. 368, ll. 14–21)

In the end, all three daughters are in full retreat from the masculine world: Palatyne remains unassailable in her cave, and Melior and Melusine disappear. Each taboo imposed by Pressine provides a mechanism to ensure a daughter's own private place, and each daughter must either maintain this liminal place or leave the masculine world altogether. Thus the daughters cannot be seduced into betraying themselves by offering their own private places—those space–times that are necessary to their autonomy and their

history—as sacrifices to the apparently inevitable patriarchal desire to control the spaces of women.[72] The only hope remaining is the open-ended tale of Palatyne. She holds the treasure of her father in trust, keeping it safe for a knight of the Lusignan line who will one day claim it and use it to reclaim the promised land. This story is left untold, forever lingering as a possible future.[73]

Cultures of Forgetting and Machines of the Mind

Carruthers makes the point that once a memory is made it is difficult to erase, but it can be written over with another memory that occupies the same memory location. This process of overlay has been shown to be particularly effective in group situations. Carruthers cites the early Christian Church as an exemplar in effecting shifts in community memory away from earlier religious traditions to acceptance of the new. For example, community memory is changed through the practice of maintaining the framework of existing rituals but changing the meaning of those rituals—by changing the memory network within which those rituals makes sense.[74] In other words, the idea of the ritual remains in its place, but the connections between that ritual and other memory locations have changed. The network pathways to and from that ritual have changed. The meaning of that memory location therefore has also changed, because when the ritual is played out, other connections are made—other associations come to mind. Community memory is important because individuals necessarily acquire a memory base from the community in which they live. Indeed community members can be identified by the collective memorial structures that they hold.[75] To change one's own memory in such a way that it contradicts community memory would not be easy to achieve. Reminders of community memory would inevitably arise to challenge one's own memory networks.

That being said, Cotter-Lynch and Herzog note that memory is active. While the memory that is made might be difficult to erase, the making of the memory in the first place, or the making of a new memory over the old, involves a choice:

> Every act of remembering involves a conscious or subconscious decision about what is worth remembering and how it is worth categorizing within one's memory stores.[76]

This suggests a hierarchy or prioritizing of memory: that which must be remembered can be remembered, but it must have sufficient importance to the rememberer. One measure of importance would surely be the gravity of the consequences that would follow from forgetting. Pressine and Melusine both indicate to their husbands the consequences of not remembering their promises, but as noted earlier in this text,[77] within the cultural context considered here, married women had little recourse if husbands broke their promises. For Elynas and Raimondin there are consequences, but at the same time a gendered hierarchy of desire is explicitly invoked by Elynas's son and Raimondin's brother. The ease with which the husbands allow themselves to forget reflects this cultural memory that prioritizes the desire of the husband above that of the wife and measures the consequences of forgetting as insignificant. The cultural narrative of a husband's proprietary rights was deeply embedded in medieval memory networks. Raimondin and Elynas forgetting their promises to their wives could therefore be understood as the reinstatement of existing, more deeply encoded memories that have been temporarily overlaid by the promises to their wives. In moments of high emotion these promises are simply (and conveniently) forgotten. Yet the promises accord with the ancient and biblical authorities offered in the prologue that men should be satisfied with knowing that they do not know and that they should not seek knowledge inconsiderately. Indeed knowing the limits of one's capacities is a path to wisdom.

The text opens up multiple layers of remembering and forgetting. On the one hand, this suggests that there are tensions between personal and cultural memories that need to be negotiated in individual relationships. Moreover, if memory-making is driven by desire, then the hierarchy of desire (and the gender implicit in that hierarchy) underpins a hierarchy of memory. On the other hand, however, it is the personal promises that have meaning within the learned framework of the text. Within the logic of *Melusine*, the collective memory of patriarchal entitlement and anxiety is countered by the individual memory of feminine subjecthood that is effected through the taboo and the preservation of the private place. Within this text forgetting the promise to the wife is a betrayal and the consequences have lasting effects on the family and its descendants.

The text, therefore, acknowledges the difficulties presented by cultural patterns of memory, but it also works to overcome them. This strategy operates within the narrative, through the successes of Pressine's memorial spaces and also in the move to awaken the audience into active participation in the re-making of memory. In this way the text itself is a "memory machine."

A machine, in medieval terms, is a structure that has moving parts and has the capacity to move things around. It lifts things up and moves them, for constructive or even destructive purposes, such as a hoist to assist in building edifices or a siege engine to destroy such edifices.[78] Carruthers explains that memory can also be called a machine: a machine of the thinking mind. A machine of the mind "moves" the mind; contemplation, creative thought, and recollection are all processes that move the mind. The structure of memory spatially conceived, as in the architectural mnemonic, represents an engine, the movement of which is the process of contemplation, recollection, and invention. One "travels" from place to place, through patterns and grids, from one location to another, reaffirming the spatial parameters of the thinking mind and its associative memory networks. In these travels, which represent the process of recollection, one selects and collects elements from the storehouse of one's memory, "gathering" appropriate compositional elements into "an idea." In this way contemplation and recollection are "inventive acts" that use as their building blocks the content of memory locations.[79]

The text of *Melusine* is a memory machine. It not only provides a built foundation of memory in a series of memorial spaces—Elynas's tomb, Melior's Sparrowhawk Castle, Palatyne's cave, and Melusine's bathroom—but also interweaves these spaces with textual repetition and other memory cues that draw the audience into active participation in memory work. The text functions as a machine that moves the mind of the audience.

As discussed, Elynas's tomb and Melior's castle both contain reproductions of the story of Pressine and Elynas, and that of their daughters. Despite the evident detail of these written and visual accounts of the story, in these episodes the story itself is not retold in the narrative. In the first depiction of Elynas's tomb, right after the events themselves occur, the smallest reference is deemed sufficient: "whereon was writon the forsaid auenture" (p. 17, l. 13). When Geoffrey finds the tomb, much later in the text, a six-line summary of the history is offered:

> 'Here lyeth my lord myn husband the noble kyng Elynas of Albanye'/and also shewed al the manyere how he was buryed there, and for what cause. And also spake of theire thre doughtirs, that is to wete, Melusyne, Melyor, and Palastyne/and how they were punysshed bycause that they had closed theire fader/as in theystory tofore is reherced. (p. 328, ll. 8–14)

While this is more than a passing gesture, only the gist, or the *res*, of the story is given rather than a word-for-word recount. It is a bare outline,

including names and relationships, just enough to indicate that the same story is being retold. In other words, the audience is required to remember the details of the story for themselves; they must insert the story into the narrative from their own memories. Moreover, as Geoffrey reads the story on the tablets, and ponders over them for some time, the audience is invited to insert the story into the narrative of Geoffrey's experience. Similarly, right at the end of the text, in the episode of Melior's Sparrowhawk Castle, the audience is called upon once again to remember the details of the story of Elynas and Pressine, and that of their daughters. Once again the audience inserts the remembered episode into the narrative as the King of Armenia ruminates upon the images that depict the "noble hystory" and reads the "vnderstandyng" in the writing beneath (p. 364, ll. 22, 23). Three times in the text the audience is asked to remember the tale of the first generation and their daughters—the tale of the first act of "forgetting," the breaking of the taboo, and the various events that follow. These moments set in train the movement of the mind that makes the text a memory machine with each act of memory retrieval re-inscribing the story yet more deeply into the audience's memory store.

Moreover, the positioning of these three episodes in the narrative is strategic. The first occurs at the very beginning of the tale, just after the events themselves have transpired, reinforcing those events into memory through immediate repetition. The third occurs right at the end of the tale, forming a final epilogic episode, farewelling the audience with one last cycle of recollection and re-inscription of memory. These two instances of memory-making frame the main narrative. This has the effect of locating the narrative within an overarching context that privileges the memorial function. The second episode, when Geoffrey finds Elynas's tomb and learns of the betrayal of Pressine and its aftermath, is interwoven with the crisis of the main narrative, when Raimondin's betrayal of Melusine is complete. This new betrayal—Raimondin's betrayal of Melusine in the second generation—is not the same story retold, but there are a number of parallels between this second betrayal/revenge episode and that of the preceding generation, which has been so carefully inscribed into the audience's memory. In both cases the wounded party is the wife who suffers at the hands of her husband. Both acts of revenge are executed by an offspring of the troubled couple: when Geoffrey hears the story about his mother, he takes revenge just as did Melusine and her sisters when they heard about their own mother. Moreover, in both cases the revenge inflicts upon the perpetrator of the betrayal a suffering similar to that experienced by the

innocent party; only, it is more severe. As Pressine was forced to flee the human world and retreat to Avalon, to live out her life within its borders, so is Elynas removed from the world and placed in a cave. As Melusine is driven to fly out of a window, so is the Earl of Forests driven to the top of a high tower and out of a window; unlike Melusine, however, he falls to his death. The repetition of betrayal/revenge episodes replays the critical moment of familial unraveling as the betrayal of a woman by her husband.

The text of *Melusine* is a memory machine that works to overcome cultural patterns of memory by inveigling the audience to participate in memory work. The approach is manifold. It memorializes events, obligations, and transgressions (promises, betrayals, and acts of revenge). It also remembers feminine subjecthood and the debt to the mother (as a memorial to the matriline). And it goes further. In broader terms the "memory machine" function calls to the audience to recognize cultural patterns in order to concede that these forgettings are the result of such patterns rather than naturally occurring gender-specific rights or behaviors. Pressine and Melusine are both betrayed by forgetting, by failures of memory of their husbands and in Pressine's case also of her daughters. These forgettings— of the mother and the matriline—are strategic in patrilineal societies. The text both acknowledges this difficulty and also remembers the mother and the matriline, and the memory machine that is this text enables the audience to participate in this memory-making.

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The medieval art of memory works to spatialize time. The linear progression of time is punctuated, even upset, by digressions that blossom out into spatial perambulations around memory networks. Rumination and contemplation further circularize time, regurgitating, recollecting, and re-inscribing memories. The text of *Melusine* operates as both a linear progression—a narrative that runs from beginning to end, indeed from pre-beginnings to post-endings—and a cyclical narrative that repeatedly calls the audience to recollect. Outside the linear progression is a temporally horizontal series of rooms, each of which itself instantiates a vertical relation with time through its memorial function. These rooms operate as a memory machine that repeatedly calls the audience back, not only to remember but also to literally reconstitute the story for insertion into gaps in the narrative. The story it calls the audience to remember, to insert

into the gaps, is the story of the mother and the matriline. Indeed the tale destabilizes the privilege of the patriline; it problematizes the father and the heritage he offers; it questions patrimony. It is this aspect of the tale that I turn to in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe: 900–1200* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 29, 90.
2. Matthew Innes, "Keeping it in the Family: Women and Aristocratic Memory, 700–1200," in *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700–1300*, ed. Elisabeth van Houts (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), pp. 17–35, on p. 30. See also Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Theory into Practice: Reading Medieval Chronicles," in *The Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 1–12, on p. 4.
3. Other genealogical histories were unashamedly political from the start. See Edward Donald Kennedy, "Romancing the Past: A Medieval English Perspective," in Kooper, *The Medieval Chronicle*, pp. 13–39.
4. Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in *Sexuality & Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), p. 349.
5. Innes, "Keeping it in the Family," p. 31.
6. Joan M. Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex: Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), particularly Chapter 3: "Women and the Writing of History," pp. 68–106.
7. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–4.
8. Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982), pp. 367–414.
9. Saenger, "Silent Reading," p. 414.
10. Andrew Taylor, "Into his Secret Chamber: Reading and Privacy in Late Medieval England," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, eds. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 43.
11. Taylor, "Into his Secret Chamber," p. 46.
12. *The Très Riches Heures of Jean, Duke of Berry*, trans. Victoria Benedict (New York: Braziller, 1969). See also Michael Camille, "The 'Très Riches Heures': An Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 1 (1990), pp. 72–107.

13. Taylor, "Into his Secret Chamber," p. 45.
14. Taylor, "Into his Secret Chamber," p. 50.
15. This example refers to Lady Margaret Beaufort. John E.B. Mayor (ed.), *The English Works of John Fisher*, EETS, es, 27 (London, 1876), 1, p. 295, cited in Taylor, "Into his Secret Chamber," p. 47.
16. Taylor, "Into his Secret Chamber," p. 51.
17. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 150. Between the time of Cicero and the thirteenth century, memory systems fell into a more rigid form of discipline. Carruthers offers numerous distinctions between memory as art and memory as discipline. Memory as discipline can be learnt from a book. It includes fixed methods of inventory-making, which are taught to young students to enable them to remember specific material. It is domiciled in the practical realm of rhetoric. An art of memory on the other hand must be learnt by apprenticeship. It is a craft, or set of principles, which can be adapted to any number of situations. It is built upon memory as discipline but extends beyond it. It is domiciled in philosophy. The architectural mnemonic is an art of memory, and Albertus Magnus, who adapted it for medieval use, was a professor of logic and theology. There are, of course, many characteristics that overlap. See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 145, 150–152.
18. Carruthers notes two major metaphors used for this store: either a wax tablet upon which images can be impressed, focusing upon the processes of memory-making, or a container—whether it be a pigeon-hole, a bookcase, or a box to rummage around in—emphasizing recollection. These metaphors for the location of a memory cell are the topic of Chapter 1 in Carruthers.
19. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 71ff.
20. See Chapter 1, Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.
21. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 139.
22. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 107.
23. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 74.
24. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 138–139.
25. This is not to suggest that wiping clean the wax tablet is erasing the memory. On the contrary, erasing the wax tablet is part of the making of a new memory. It is part of the physical or mental process of inscribing one's memory. It is also part of the process of the *compositio* of recollection, which includes drafting, revising, and polishing the recollection to make sure it conforms with one's *res* in intention and accuracy. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 156, 195.
26. Carruthers citing Averroes, *The Book of Memory*, p. 59.
27. Carruthers mentions a number of sources for the student to find ready-made memory images including the Bestiaries, the Zodiac, and the

Calendar (pp. 126–127); illuminated manuscripts (pp. 242–257); and the art of the Gothic cathedral (pp. 221–222).

28. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 59–60.

29. Cited in Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 219.

30. The higher value placed upon this capacity is consistent with the ethical value attached to the practice of rhetoric by Cicero, Quintilian, and Augustine (p. 74) and the traditions of public address which developed in the later Middle Ages, especially in the universities but also at court, in church, and even in the marketplace (p. 154). Carruthers notes two "fatal errors" possible in oration (which she confidently asserts are "repeated by every writer on the subject through the Middle Ages"), the second of which is "to appear in any way to be reciting word for word a pre-written text" (p. 208).

31. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 73.

32. The information contained in these memory systems can be encyclopedic. E.g., Carruthers notes that *De arca Noe mystica* is "a cosmography—a combination of *mappa mundi* and *genealogia*, together with mnemonics for the vices and virtues…, the books of the bible, a calendar, and other assorted categories of information—all put together as an elaborate set of schematics imposed upon the Genesis description of Noah's Ark" (p. 232).

33. This is what Carruthers refers to as its modern title. Others include "De pictura archae," "de visibilia pictura archae," and "depinctio archae." See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 231–239. The potential of the spatial schema of *ars memorativa* is demonstrated by Hugh's extraordinary example. As the architectural metaphor suggests, the arrangement of places is not limited to two dimensions. The ark is described three-dimensionally, and then it continues to complicate with additional columns, ladders, and rooms within and ellipses and arcs without. None of the fifty-three extant manuscripts contain a diagrammatic representation of the ark (p. 231). Indeed Carruthers notes inconsistency and incoherency in the descriptions, which make it impossible to provide a definitive illustration (p. 232). It is, in a sense, four dimensional: coherent at any one moment, but changing in shape as one moves through the text.

34. Hugh of St. Victor, *De arca Noe mystcia*, cols. 702D–703A, as cited by Carruthers. *The Book of Memory*, p. 233.

35. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 167.

36. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 164.

37. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 219.

38. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 3.

39. For an interesting discussion on the notion of the individual and groups in the twelfth-century Christian Church see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press,

1984), particularly Chapter 3: "Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?"

40. For an explication of the construction of the love relation between Melusine and Raimondin see the second half of Chapter 2, above.

41. In relation to Melusine, E.S. Hartland has noted that the absence of the father at childbirth is, or has been, customary in some parts of the world: in the Loyalty Islands the absence of the husband is enforced, among the "Votiaks" no one except the midwife witnesses the birth, among the "Ossetes" the mother is "sent home to her own people" to give birth, and "it is very rarely that the Abruzzian husband is allowed to be present" (p. 195). He notes similar customs "near Cracow" in the Ukraine, Albania, and even as far afield as Japan he finds a less definitive but nevertheless suggestive custom of building a private parturition-house separate from the main dwelling (p. 196). In a somewhat off-handed way, embedded within his discussion of the customs of "far-off lands," Hartland makes the momentous comment that "In our own social conditions [the father's] absence is a matter of course," as recently as 1913 (p. 195). Hartland, "The Romance of *Mélusine*" (see Introd., n. 5).

42. The publication of the influential midwife's manual *Den Swangern frawne und hebammen Roszgarten* in Nuremberg in 1513 suggests that midwives were a literate and respectable group. Carolyne Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 79. By the end of the Middle Ages most large city councils in Europe employed midwives, prescribing minimal levels of training and other qualifications. Claudia Opitz, "Life in the Late Middle Ages," in Klapisch-Zuber, *A History of Women II*, pp. 267–318 (see Chap. 3, n. 22).

43. "It is certainly accurate to say that pregnancy, birth, and all associated knowledge and practices were a purely female domain in the Middle Ages." Claudia Opitz, "Life in the Late Middle Ages," p. 289. According to Chiara Frugoni, in all nativity scenes from the period there are women present but no men. Chiara Frugoni, "The Imagined Woman," in Klapisch-Zuber, *A History of Women II*, pp. 336–422.

44. Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450–1500* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1996), p. 130

45. Of all married women between the ages of 25 and 30 who died in Florence in 1424, 20 % died in childbirth. Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 35

46. Marie de France, in "Le Fresne," reveals this superstition as a slander upon good women. Glyn A. Burgess and Keith Busby (eds.), *The Lais of Marie de France*, (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 61–67. See also Erik Kooper, "Multiple Births and Multiple Disaster: Twins in Medieval Literature," in *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly*, eds. Keith Busby and Norris J. Lacy (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1994), pp. 253–269.

47. As has often been argued about Melusine herself. See Spiegel, "Maternity and Monstrosity" (see Introd., n. 14).

48. Frugoni, "The Imagined Woman," p. 384. See also the tale of Trotula, who practiced in Salerno in Italy and wrote at least one gynecological text, and whose special knowledge on the "secrets of women" made her a suspected witch and procuress. Claude Thomasset, "The Nature of Women," in Kapisch-Zuber, *A History of Women II*, p. 62, and Carolyne Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 50, 193.

49. "Men had neither experience nor a voice in such matters, and a sense of modesty forbade their presence at the birth of a baby," Opitz, "Life in the Late Middle Ages," p. 289.

50. Danielle Régnier-Bohler, "Exploring Literature," in Duby (ed.), *A History of Private Life II*, pp. 367–368 (see Chap. 3, n. 12). Elynas's untimely visit also has the narrative purpose of positioning him as witness to the complete human form of his daughters.

51. E.g., "The misdeed of the three sisters—i.e., the vengeful imprisonment of Helinas," Kelly, "The Domestication of the Marvelous," p. 41 (see Introd., n. 16).

52. Spiegel, "Maternity and Monstrosity," p. 106; Laurence De Looze, "'La fourme du pié toute escripte': Melusine and the Entrance into History," *in Melusine of Lusignan*, eds. Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, p. 126 (see Introd., n. 7); Nichols, "Melusine between Myth and History," p. 153 (see Introd., n. 7); Marina S. Brownlee, "Interference in Melusine," p. 230 (see Introd., n. 11).

53. The transgressions of the taboos are also recognized as betrayals by Brownlee in "Interference in Mélusine," p. 230.

54. Daniel Poirion offers one possible reason for this. Referring to Freud's theory on the foundation of society, explicated in *Totem and Taboo*, Poirion points out that the founding parricide was committed by the sons: the "horde fraternelle." Within such a framework, for the daughters to commit such a crime is "contre-nature." Daniel Poirion, *Le merveilleux dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, coll. "Que sais-je?" 1982), p. 214. However, it should be noted that a hallmark of Freud's work is the naturalization of the passivity of women. Any action by a woman could therefore be construed as against nature.

55. I have found no discussion on the offense against the mother.

56. Elynas's son by a previous marriage, Nathas, resents Pressine and induces Elynas to the visit the birthing chamber thereby break the pact (p. 11).

57. Sturm-Maddox makes a similar reading of Melusine's interpretation and actions, referring to "The gap that opens between her hasty interpretation and her mother's pronouncement" ("Crossed Destinies," p. 15, see Chap. 1,

n. 13). However, Sturm-Maddox's reading and mine diverge in that she reads Pressine's anger as a result of an offense against the father but makes no mention of an offense against Pressine.

58. The eye of the mind and the eye of the body are discussed in Chapter 1.

59. "close[d] &[or] shett" is reiterated three times, each in connection with the gaze: by Melusine to her sisters after her desire has been kindled by the look (p. 14, l. 10–11), by the narrator after the sisters have agreed that their desire is "to see" their mother avenged (ll. 18–19), and by Melusine again to inform her mother of their action (ll. 25–26).

60. Similar denials of feminine uniqueness in the love relation can be found in the actions of Elynas's son and Raimondin's brother. Each of these two men pierces the privacy of the love relation, engaging directly with one participant (the man), without any consideration for the will, agency, or privacy of the other participant (the woman), inducing the first participant to similarly disregard the terms upon which the relation is based. Melusine's presumption is a precursor to what Raimondin is induced to later in the text in relation to herself.

61. In the English version, the statue is unambiguously of Elynas: "a Statue or ymage of Alabaster, kerued & made aftir the lengthe, lyknes, & fourme of Kinge Elynas" (p. 17, ll. 10–11). In the French version, however, the first statue is not named (Stouff, p. 14, see Introd., n. 4) and is interpreted by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox as of Pressine; Maddox and Sturm-Maddox (trans.), *Jean d'Arras. Melusine; or, the Noble History of Lusignan* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), p. 26. In both versions the second statue is identified as of Pressine (Melusine, p. 328; Stouff, p. 265).

62. Guyon's treatment of Florie is discussed in the next chapter. See also Jan Shaw, "Courtly love and the Tale of Florie in the Middle English *Melusine*," *Leeds Studies in English*, New Series 35, pp. 101–120.

63. For a discussion on the ascetic qualities of overnight vigils, see Sarah Macmillan, "'The Nyghtes Watchys': Sleep deprivation in Medieval Devotional Culture," *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 39, no. 1 (2013), pp. 23–42.

64. Gerald of Wales identifies Avalon as Glastonbury, which he says: "is completely surrounded by marshlands," *The Journey Through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1978), p. 283.

65. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1966), p. 217.

66. Gerald of Wales, p. 286. Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 261.

67. Gerald of Wales, p. 283. Morgan, in her various manifestations, is ubiquitous in both folklore and romance. See Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au*

Moyen Âge (see Introd., n. 5). Also, see "Morgain la fée in Oral Tradition," and "Breton Folklore and Arthurian Romance," in *Studies in Medieval Literature*: *A Memorial Collection*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (New York: B. Franklin, 1970).

68. "Lanval," in Burgess and Busby, *The Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 73–81.
69. Eugène Vinaver (ed.), *Malory*: *Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; 2nd ed. 1978).
70. The tail also references hidden sources of power, relevant to the building works discussed in Chapter 3.
71. Guyon's own relation to the feminine is problematic. See Chapter 5.
72. This is not presented as a naturalized masculine desire. Elynas and Raimondin, when left to themselves, happily maintain the prescribed limits of their marital relationships, and thus sustain the divine *ordo* through the mechanism of the amorous exchange. However, other male members of their families, representing a more generalized patriarchal interest, induce them to breach these limits.
73. In *Melusine* there is only one mention of Palatyne's cave, early in the text when Pressine distributes her judgments. In *Partenay*, however, and in *Couldrette*, a later episode in the tale tells of a knight who fails to gain access to Palatyne's cave, and when Geoffrey hears of it, he decides that he must make the attempt but dies before he is able to do so. (*Partenay*, pp. 196–208.)
74. Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*: *Meditation*, *Rhetoric*, *and the Making of Images*, *400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 54–57.
75. Margaret Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog, "Introduction," in *Reading*, *Memory and Identity in the Texts of Medieval European Holy Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 7.
76. Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog, "Introduction," p. 3.
77. See Chapter 2.
78. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 23.
79. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, pp. 22–24, especially p. 23.

Problematic Pasts and New Beginnings

As the narrative of *Melusine* flows from past to present, and as Melusine and Raimondin's family grows, the third generation inevitably has its moment at the forefront of the story. Prior to Raimondin's betrayal there are hopeful stories for the future as four of Melusine and Raimondin's sons go out into the world to make their own way—to gain honor and renown. This chapter considers this next generation, focusing on the four Marriage Tales. These tales are considered in conversation with two other fifteenth-century Middle English prose romances, the *Siege of Thebes* (hereafter the *Prose Thebes*) and the *Prose Life of Alexander* (hereafter the *Prose Alexander*): all three texts tell the tales of sons going out into the world, and all three tales are founded on patricide-like acts. Indeed the parallel between the patricide of Anectanebus by Alexander in the *Prose Alexander* and Raimondin's accidental killing of his uncle in *Melusine* is notable.[1] In both cases the father/father-figure reads in the stars the circumstances of his own death and the socio political ascension of his killer, only moments before the homicide occurs. While the patricide itself in the *Prose Thebes* does not fit this pattern, the narrative has similar vertical and horizontal relationship complications as those seen in *Melusine*. In both the *Prose Thebes* and The Marriage Tales the main protagonists are in the third generation and the difficulties of sharing patrimony between sons becomes a narrative impetus. In all three texts the sons journey out from the paternal home and find the potential for a new life and a new identity

away from a domestic heritage tainted by patricide. Moreover, in all three texts the events occur in the East, in ancient Greece, Persia, and the eastern frontiers of the crusade era. All tales, therefore, invoke discourses of identity—in terms of foundational myths or historical threats—that engage with fifteenth-century political concerns of self/other boundaries fueled by fears of the Ottoman advance.

Fifteenth-century prose romances are characterized by treachery, patricide, the breakdown of succession, and a general decline in social and political order that is not resolved. The restoration of order through reunion, reconciliation, appropriate succession, and other markers of neat closure and happy ending are common characteristics of romance, but these largely fall away in this late prose form.[2] Helen Cooper, who has long championed a more attentive approach to fifteenth-century English prose romance, has noted that these particularities in content as well as form indicate a shift in attitude. Cooper argues that the prose form, associated as it had been with historiography rather than with more imaginative and fictional genres, brought with it implicit claims to historicity that changed the way these texts engaged with social realities.[3] At this time in England the social realities of most people who were the audience of romance would have undoubtedly been influenced, at least to some degree, by the political instability leading up to and including civil war. Indeed Megan Leitch has persuasively demonstrated that the literature of the time was highly sensitive to political conditions, and that sensitivity was reflected in the extensive use of tropes of treason and betrayal, represented in romance literature as infecting both hierarchical and horizontal social and familial relationships.[4]

The pressures on social and political life were indeed significant and had been building for some time. The century opened on a Europe destabilized by the Papal Schism, and the Hundred Years' War continued to drain English (and French) emotional, human, political, and financial resources. The Ottoman empire was in an expansionary phase that was to last throughout the century, and repeated papal appeals to support crusade through prayers, sermons, and financial assistance, culminating in the appearance of fundraising chests in English parish churches, would have kept that particular menace constantly in mind.[5] Crusade romance went some way to ameliorate these threats by setting up a clear religious divide between self and other and simultaneously offering a spiritually driven unifying force to Christian Europe.[6] Indeed Leila Norako identifies a push in this literature to "actualize a domestication of massacre," that

relies upon the other being "unequivocally evil…and incapable of achieving salvation."[7] Crusade is a deadly conflict that goes beyond life; it is "a fantasy of conquest for the glory of God and the sake of an individual's soul."[8] Crusade ambitions were, therefore, predicated upon the mobilization of extreme prejudice against those on the other side of the religious divide, and crusade romance evidences the manifold ways in which those others were demonized. For Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, the "Saracen" of crusade romance (a term, Cohen finds, could refer to Arab, African, Indian, Mongol, Muslim, Jew, Pagan, or anyone who is not a western Christian) is rarely particularized through naming; social role; linguistic, religious, or ethnic differentiation; or any other identifiers that would specify their own characteristics as individuals or even members of a community.[9] They are desocialized and dehumanized, mitigating the risk that the audience might identify or sympathize with them and thereby assuaging any residual guilt that might otherwise linger in the event of wholesale slaughter.[10] Geraldine Heng, in considering the relationship between history and romance, finds that romance enacts "transformational repetition" by reworking the memory of historical trauma such that it resurfaces elsewhere. In crusade romance horrific acts of crusading Christians are replayed, but they are displaced onto the Saracen other. In other words, they are reconstituted to support (rather than undercut) Christian chivalric heroism.[11]

Narrative maneuvers also had a tendency to cultivate an idealized unity on the Christian side of the religious divide, which was contrary to the political reality of Europe at that time. The Hundred Years' War is not the only *prima facie* case against such optimistic but ultimately illusory claims. The Papal Schism also problematized ideals of a unified Christian Europe, crystalizing apparently religious divisions along largely national lines, thereby politicizing religious allegiance, which in turn led to crusades and crusade-like campaigns instigated by Christians against Christians in the name of "holy war."[12] Indeed the two came into painful synchronicity in the Despenser Crusade of 1383, in which the English supported the Flemish in a revolt against their French overlords. This campaign was defended by the rhetoric of crusade and had substantial popular support (perhaps due to the plenary indulgences on offer from Rome),[13] but it was ultimately politically and economically motivated—a fact which later drew criticism from higher levels of English society, although it is unclear whether this criticism was because of its failure or its appropriation of the "crusade" ideal.[14] Ironically crusade-like rhetoric, that solidified the

identity of the nation-state and reimagined crusade to include campaigns against other Christians, necessarily divided attention and resources and contributed to Christian Europe's incapacity to launch an effective resistance against the northward and westward movements of the Ottomans during the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the call to crusade against the Ottomans continued and the crusade enterprise remained powerfully engaged with the western medieval mind. Crusade romance provided the opportunity for such engagement through imaginative participation in a "fantasy" crusade. These purely meditative experiences allowed participants to forego the actual crusade or pilgrimage, focusing instead on an inner journey effected through the visualization of progress along the path of that crusade or pilgrimage.[15] Norako finds that the "fantasy crusade" of crusade romance operated as both backward- and forward-looking, as "nostalgic and anticipatory," offering the fantasy of both an idealized Christian past, in the representation of successful crusader campaigns, and the imaginary playing out of a reclamation of that past at some time in the future.[16]

While crusade romance celebrates a fantasy of Christian unity and works to resuscitate chivalric heroes through the displacement of debasements onto the Saracen other, Leitch and Cooper find that in fifteenth-century prose romances intolerable actions are no longer displaced and the fiction of unity falls away. Indeed within the English historical context of internal and external political instability leading up to and including the Wars of the Roses, it would be difficult to sustain such idealized constructions. Instead, in these romances difficult behaviors can be found within the kin group, the community, and/or society at large, breaking up unity and fostering dissent. No longer elided, these behaviors are brought to the surface. They are acknowledged and therefore potentially available for discussion. Indeed Leitch argues that while treason plays a central role in these narratives, the negativity of its representation is a deliberate didactic strategy to realign behavior away from such transgressions.[17] Moreover, rather than hoping for providential intervention, she posits that these texts focus on the potential of human agency to resist and circumvent the operation of treason.[18]

I would like to take this argument further by considering the next step, after internal breakdown and treasonous activity. Specifically in this chapter I consider the narrative trajectories that are set in train by patricide. Father-killing destabilizes patrilineage. It puts identity up for question. It literally makes a space within which identity can be reworked. In all

these tales father-killing effects a shift in available identity patterns that can flow through to following generations. These shifts suggest problems with the legitimating function of history and the traditionally privileged paternal lines of descent. In all three texts new opportunities for identity construction are found beyond the borders of patrimony, but only the *Prose Alexander* tackles head on the identity inherited through patrilineage. The *Prose Thebes* and *Melusine* sideline patrilineage, focusing instead on the opportunities found in outward trajectories and forward-thinking perspectives. The act of patricide represents a break with the past and signals a shift to a new approach. These stories demonstrate a positive interaction with the new. Outward journeys produce positive results; new places present new opportunities. Indeed, these stories break down the us/them dichotomies of self and other that Heng and Cohen find in the more brutally divided crusade romances.

The Prose *Siege of Thebes*

> The profound circularity of Thebanness, its inability ever to diverge from the reversionary shape ordained in and by its beginning, is reflected in the details of Oedipus' life as the Middle Ages constructed them. At once malevolent and pitiable, Oedipus becomes both agent and victim of the self-imposed genocide that decimates Thebes. As a son he kills his father Lauis… and as a father he re-enacts his primal crime by cursing his sons…Even the smallest details of his life express the compulsions of repetition and circularity…Mount Cithaeron…the riddle
>
> Lee Patterson[19]

The most interesting thing about this statement is that it does not apply to the prose *Siege of Thebes*[20] or perhaps that the *Prose Thebes* does not play out this Thebanness. In the *Prose Thebes* Edippes does not curse his sons, Mount Cithaeron is not his place of exile even once, and the Sphinx offers no riddle. Moreover, as the *Prose Thebes* shifts from the second to the third generation, the focus also shifts from predestination to choice and introduces narrative blockages that resist the cycle of return that is that mark of Patterson's Thebanness. While the broad sweep of the narrative is the same as its predecessors, the threads of narrative that run through the text form their own pattern that creates an opening through which new trajectories to new futures could take flight.

The *Prose Thebes* is a small epitome version of the Theban tragedy that reduces Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* from 80 folios of verse (4700 lines) to ten folios of prose. While this summary form might suggest that little of interest can be gleaned from close study, particular meaning can be found in the choices involved in the selection or excision of material. Within a context in which the audience might be expected to know the broader tale, particularly through Lydgate's widely disseminated version,[21] this process of selection lends greater strategic weight to the material kept and indeed sometimes developed into new directions.

The *Prose Thebes* celebrates a forward-looking perspective and promotes the value of outward movements. In the traditional Theban narrative history repeats itself through familial implosion from one generation to the next, and indeed in the *Prose Thebes* looking back and attempting to reclaim the past does lead to a disastrous end. Nevertheless, while the inevitability of the traditional Theban conclusion does constrain the narrative, there is a moment in the story that presents the possibility of looking to the future for opportunity and renewal. Indeed at one point the narrative almost takes on such a shift in impetus toward the positive of the new. Narrative blockages to return also contribute to a sense that the text resists the traditional outcome and instead repeatedly gestures toward other possibilities. The negative outcome is, in the end, the result of human choices. The notion of human choice, even if the wrong choice is made on this occasion, undercuts the power of fate and fortune. Casting the negative ending as an outcome of human error leaves open the possibility that another choice could have been made, that other choices—other endings—are possible.

The *Prose Thebes* focuses on the third generation in the traditional Oedipal narrative.[22] The first two generations are dealt with briefly, but, importantly, they appear at the start of the narrative. The narrative then continues in linear fashion, creating a teleological history rather than the cyclical repeat suggested by, for example, Statius's *Thebaid*, the narrative of which focuses on one generation only, using flashback and other analeptic devices to fill past gaps.[23] The *Prose Thebes* opens with the dilemma of Layus and Jocasta's childlessness, Layus's sacrifice and prayer to the gods, and the consequent conception of a child. Even before his birth, the "wisest clerkes" (p. 47) have prophesied Layus's death at the hands of the child. The story of Edippes is thereby pre-determined; Edippes's disastrous return to Thebes is predicated upon his father trying to avoid his own fate and Edippes pays the price for this. The story of the next generation, however, is not constrained by fate; rather, human agency

comes to the fore. The third generation[24] can move beyond the constraints of their corrupt past through considered choices and active agency. Each of the two sons is free to make a choice; both make the wrong choice and come to disaster, but each of them has the choice to look beyond past jealousies and move forward in space and time. Pollymet comes the closest to achieving this. In his adventure to Arge a possible future is explicitly mapped out for him. He is offered a new home, a new family, a new future. He is given the chance to leave the past behind—to move forward and outward. In the *Prose Thebes* this outward gesture is not expansionary or imperialistic. The future looks rosy for Tedeus and Pollymet because they arrive in a new city that needs them. Their arrival in Arge presents positive interactions with the new.

While the story of Oedipus throughout its long history chronicles the consequences of mistaken identity and false return, this particular version emphasizes the negativity of the return journey in ways that the sources do not. The basic narrative of Edippes's return to Thebes is the same as in the sources, in that along the way he unwittingly kills his father, defeats the Sphinx, and becomes King of Thebes. In the *Prose Thebes* this return journey differs, in that it presents an angry Edippes, whose violent actions are underpinned by disillusionment and are unmitigated by circumstances or context. For example, in Lydgate Edippes kills Layus in the press of tournament battle rather than single combat,[25] and in earlier versions the fatal altercation arises out of a dispute at crossroads.[26] In the *Prose Thebes*, however, Edippes kills both the porter and an unarmed Layus at the gate of Pilotes Castle "in ful grete rage" that the gate "was not opened at þe first worde" (p. 48). There is no mêlée; there is not even an argument. His immediate and urgent flight betrays the guilt of the outburst. Further, when Edippes meets the Sphinx, the riddle episode does not appear.[27] There is no intellectual exchange, no puzzle. Without the riddle episode, there is no failure of the riddle and so the beheading of the Sphinx is not part of the agreed outcome. Instead the Sphinx is killed by Edippes in a spontaneous act of violence. Edippes meets the "horrible beest a monster" that "had ny destroyed þe contre aswel of man as of beest," and in the next breath he beheads it. While the killing of the Sphinx eradicates a pestilence from Thebes and the surrounding countryside, Edippes's behavior suggests a trophy killing: he "brought þe hede with him to Thebes" (p. 48). In these ways the narrative of Edippes's journey to Thebes in the *Prose Thebes* is much darker than in the sources. Edippes is shown to carry violent anger with him and strike out at the smallest provocation. He has an entirely inward-looking perspective.

This new treatment in the narrative of Edippes's journey changes the meaning of Pollymet's later journey to Arge. Pollymet's journey in the *Prose Thebes* parallels that in Lydgate, but its significance is changed because it echoes and is thereby drawn into comparison with Edippes's journey. Pollymet is in voluntary exile while his brother Ethiocles takes his yearly turn at the kingship of Thebes. As Pollymet makes his way through unknown lands, he arrives at the City of Arge after midnight and during a storm. He finds refuge on a porch. Soon after, Tedeus, who is also looking for a safe harbor for the night, approaches and asks to share the space. Unreasonably, Pollymet refuses; they argue and end up in hand-to-hand combat. The porch scene replays the earlier encounter at the gate where Edippes killed the porter and Layus: Pollymet similarly resorts to violence for little reason. Unlike in the Edippes episode, however, here Pollymet has met an equal opponent who is fully armed, so the fight continues until the king arrives and calm is restored. The narrative of impulsive anger and unjustifiable violence, which in Edippes's journey is carried to its irretrievably negative conclusion, is interrupted here and its trajectory is reset. Pollymet and Tedeus stay in Arge, marry two princesses, and become the king's heirs and devoted brothers-in-law. In other words, they stay in this hitherto unknown place, find a new family, and have the potential of a new life. Edippes, too, arrives at an unknown city on his way to Thebes, but he kills two unarmed men and leaves hastily. His return to Thebes is marked by further error. While he apparently finds a new family, eventually it is revealed that his violent act fulfills the prophecy that he would kill his father and that his new family is not new at all; indeed, he unwittingly creates a corrupt dynasty founded on incest.

Of course, the two journeys had different purposes and different relations to origin. Edippes's journey is one of return: he is seeking his birthplace and his family identity. His stop at Pilotes Castle along the way is unplanned and his murder of the two men impulsive and reckless (although predestined). Pollymet, on the other hand, is not on a return journey to his ancestral home; he is going out. He is not aiming to reclaim his patrimony; rather, he is in political exile for one year and looking forward to unforeseen and unexpected adventures. The city he comes to is an unknown place. The violence at the porch transforms into a serendipitous encounter with a new and true friend. The family he meets has no connection with his own, and he is invited to join them through the forward-looking concern of the king. Pollymet's narrative parallels Edippes's in many ways, but the difference lies in its outward-looking perspective. In this new place, Pollymet finds all the potential for a positive future.

This forward-looking perspective is developed further in the relationship between Pollymet and Tedeus, the progress of which is a testament to the forward thinking and planning of Adrastus, King of Arge. After entertaining the two young knights for some time, reflecting upon their royal blood and other positive attributes, and their status as exiles, Adrastus offers his two daughters in marriage to the two young knights, explaining that the daughters are his heirs: "þe which after my decese, shulle enherite al my reme, with al my oþer possessions and richesse."[28] Adrastus's focus is not on his daughters, who never appear, but on securing the knights for them (and for himself). The narrative attention also falls upon the relationship between the knights. The number two is repeated five times across seven lines in reference to the daughters and the knights,[29] linking not only the two daughters with the two knights, but linking the two knights together as brothers. Unlike Lydgate, who focuses on courtly love, wooing and sighing for some narrative and textual time,[30] the *Prose Thebes* has no wooing and moves from marriage to brothers-in-law to brothers in quick and contrastive succession.

> The day of spousell sette with grete sollempnite and array full rially was done; Tedeus wedded þe elder called Deyphille, and Pollymet þe yonger called Argyve. – Thes two knightes by alliaunce, loued so truly togidre alwey during theire lyves, þat þere was neuer truer love founde betwixt two breþeren. But ye shull white, that worde & knowlage of this worthi and strong mariage, was sone sprong and ran, into many a strange londe, so þat hit come to þe eris of his broþer Ethiocles, which þereof, was right sory in hert, stonding þe more in doute of þat mighti alliaunce, lest Pollymet at his next commyng for to receyve his dignite of Thebes, wold by strength exclude and disherite him for euermore. (p. 50)

The first sentence refers directly to the marriages of the two knights with the two princesses. The language of the second sentence is consistent with the discourse of weddings and marriage, with married love rather than brotherly love, but the participants in the superlative "true love" are the knights themselves rather than the wedded couples. Indeed this brotherly love is so strongly expressed that the reference in the third sentence to "this worthi and strong mariage" could almost be to the relationship between Pollymet and Tedeus rather than Pollymet and his new wife; "þat mighti alliaunce" certainly includes the wider family. Gliding over the wives and the marriages as purely instrumental, what matters here is Pollymet's alliance with a powerful family and his relationship with Tedeus. Interestingly Ethiocles recognizes that the inclusion of his brother

into this family will increase his brother's power. In other words, Ethiocles assumes that mutual support and collective endeavor are the consequences of being part of a family, which is deeply ironic, given Ethiocles and Pollymet's deadly rivalry. The newly forged relationships expressed in this episode suggest that brothers-in-law make better political partners than do blood brothers who harbor old jealousies. These relationships are forward-looking and full of positive potential. There is no history to endlessly resurface, no old grievances to reappear.

The relationship between Pollymet and Tedeus is drawn in stark contrast to that of Pollymet and Ethiocles. The blood brothers are continually in dispute; indeed, their rivalry is the core of the narrative in all versions. Legal agreements, oaths, and covenants are the tools that have become necessary to manage the relationship between the blood brothers (in contrast to the relationship between the brothers-in-law, which, as we have already seen, is based upon love.) After Edippes death,[31] the lords of Thebes must expend considerable effort to negotiate an agreement between the brothers, the insecurity of which is underscored by the heavy legalistic language in which it is described.[32] These same lords try to persuade Ethiocles to uphold the agreement by pointing out the gravity of his legal obligations,[33] and Tedeus argues that the documents were properly executed with the consent of the primary parties and witnessed by men of appropriate authority.[34] When Jocasta comes to the Greek camp, attempting to negotiate peace, Tedeus once again claims Pollymet's legal right and even has handy "copies redy to shewe" (p. 270). Pollymet's legal claim cannot be refuted, and the breach of legal contract is the pretext for the war. Yet the failure of the legal contract demonstrates the false confidence that it engenders in securing a continuation of the past into the future. Once Ethiocles has made a conscious decision to break the legal agreement the law itself is rendered obsolete.

The legal framework, it would seem, is no replacement for familial bonds. Moreover, where familial bonds exist, the law is not required. Between Pollymet and Tedeus there is no legal agreement; nor is there one between Adrastus and his two sons-in-law. In his study on siege warfare in Middle English romance, Malcolm Hebron observes that "proven allies and secure deals" are just as important to the successful outcome of a siege as "technical and strategic superiority in battle."[35] Pollymet, Tedeus, and Adrastus do not need a legal document because they are secure allies. Adrastus does not need contracts between himself and the lords who come to his assistance; they "come thider at theire owne cost

and charge," and every man was "wel content and plesed" (p. 269).[36] Indeed, Adrastus's retinue, collected from across Greece, includes young knights with "coragious desires" who urge the others to fight on when disheartened (p. 271). Ethiocles, on the other hand, is described as having "corrupt blode" (p. 51) and requires "euery man…þeire lyves most be plegge" (p. 269). Legal contracts represent agreements of last resort; they are used where other interpersonal bonds fail. Moreover, their status is ambiguous because they are not enforceable except through violence. The legal contract between Ethiocles and Pollymet is not enabling or productive; it creates a stalemate from which there is no resolution. This breakdown of the legal process, through which Pollymet was hoping to effect his lawful return, is a narrative blockage; the narrative cannot continue down this route.

In the *Prose Thebes* going back—or attempting to go back—is mistaken. Edippes goes back, and the consequences are tragic. Yet he was in many ways innocent; he was caught in a narrative pre-determined by fate. Indeed when he discovers the truth of his parentage and his own incestuous union, he literally weeps "oute bothe his eighen" (p. 49) and dies away soon after. The next generation, on the other hand, has a choice. This generational shift from less self-determination to more is reflected in the prognostications of the clerks. The prophecy made upon the conception of Edippes was pronounced with certainty: "in þe tyme of his begetting, þe heuenes weren eueryche so contrarius to oþer, and of suche nature, þat þei founde redely, *hit shuld sle þe fader*" (my emphasis, p. 47), whereas the divination of the bishop Amphiorax is conditional: "*if* Adrastus held for the his iornay to Thebes, *þat* al þe chef blode of Grece shuld be destroyed & lost" (my emphasis, p. 269). By making an active and informed choice, rather than being spurred on by the gods, the responsibility for the choice is greater but the possibility of other choices is introduced. When Amphiorax falls into a cleft in the earth, which then closes above him— thus fulfilling at least part of the prophecy—Adrastus expresses doubt and suggests the abandonment of the siege, but the young knights argue for war. The conditional prophecy inevitably plays out, with Adrastus the only active fighter who is spared.

Just prior to the final battle, another narrative blockage intervenes. Jocasta attempts an emotional appeal to avert war between her sons. The treatment in the *Prose Thebes* differs from Lydgate, in which Jocasta operates as Ethiocles envoy, traveling to the Greek camp to offer Polymytes a compromise.[37] The decisive factor in Lydgate, however, is not persuasion

or emotional appeal; it is the tame tiger of the royal house of Thebes that escapes the city and is killed by the fearful Greeks. This event is enough to rupture the pre-battle tension, and war spontaneously breaks out.[38] The tiger also appears in both the *Roman de Thebes* and the *Thebaid*. The killing of the tiger is the trigger for violence, and so in all these sources it is a turning point that overtakes human intention. In the *Prose Thebes*, Jocasta is no envoy and there is no tiger to destabilize fragile human negotiations. Jocasta travels of her own volition and has no compromise to offer. Instead, she tries to avert war through personal appeal. The choice to move from a siege to an outright attack is an active one. Interestingly, Jocasta and both her daughters also escape harm.

In addition to prophetic and personal appeals and legal impediment, physical resistance against Pollymet's return is markedly foregrounded in the *Prose Thebes*. Ethiocles not only stocks the city with food and mercenary soldiers from far afield but also reinforces the fortifications around the city with ditches and moats, with machicolated towers, by blocking waterways with chains, and by stocking his defenses with weaponry (p. 269). The siege preparations far exceed those found in Lydgate, in both detail and proportionate textual space and are recognizably accurate as late medieval siegecraft.[39] The most important narrative blockage is, therefore, also a physical obstacle. Unlike in Lydgate, in the *Prose Thebes* there is a full-scale attempt to overcome the physical barrier of the castle walls that is described using real medieval siege weapons and techniques: "ordeynyng ladders, picos, and many oþer wepon, full cruelly assailing þe Cite on euery side with skaling, mynyng þe wallys foynyng and sheting, hewyng downe of bruges and barreris" (p. 271). Hebron discusses this passage in detail so it will suffice here to say that the three basic approaches to conquering a city wall are included here—scaling (up), mining (under), and breaching (through)—along with appropriate tools including ladders and picks.[40] Despite their determination and militaristic method, the attack is repelled and many Greeks are killed. Ethiocles and his men then issue out of the city to meet the approaching army in the field. The final battle occurs outside the walls rather than within (p. 271). The battle is a disaster on both sides: Pollymet and Ethiocles kill each other, and many others also perish. The strengthened fortifications succeed in their primary purpose, and Pollymet never sets foot inside the city again.

The narrative blockages to Pollymet's return to Thebes are many: the failure of the legal contract, the prophecy of Amphiorax, the arguments of Adrastas and Jocasta, and the failure of the assault on the walls—all

militate against return. In the sources, while these obstacles exist to a greater or lesser degree, they are overcome by the intervention of the gods or some other act of fate and the cycle of return inexorably repeats. In the *Prose Thebes*, however, human choice is invoked at every stage. While the choices made lead to disaster, the offering of choice is a key new element in this text, which opens up the possibility of a different response. Indeed, the contrast between the relationships of the brothers and that of the brothers-in-law highlights the potential for change. The *Prose Thebes* is more than a story about inherited family corruption brought about by Layus's misguided attempt to thwart fate. It eschews the old jealousies of a family dispute that treasure entitlements for things already lost. Rather, it celebrates looking out and forward to new people and places and the opportunities they bring. The hope for the future is in Arge and in the new family that Pollymet finds there. Sadly, this is thrown away in the pursuit of lost legacies and Pollymet must take responsibility for this choice, but the audience can learn from his mistake. If there is a lesson in this story, it is that the past is not inevitable. The future can be different. Individuals make choices that replicate the past and trap them in existing social patterns, but other avenues are possible. This story, therefore, rather than viewing the world as locked into a continual cycle of repetition and return, urges for the breaking of past patterns and for finding an opening and pushing through it. The way forward is the way outward on a new trajectory into a different future.

The Prose *Life of Alexander*

> … downe in to þe dyke, and thare he fellee, & was alle to-fruschede; and þane Alexander saide vn-to hym one this wyse. 'Fals wreche…that presumeȝ to telle thyngeȝ þat ere to come, reȝte als þou were a prophete, and knewe þe preuateȝ of heuene'…And thane Anectanabus ansuerde, & saide: 'I wyste wele ynoghe…þat I scholde die swylke a dede. Talde I noȝte lange are to þe, that myne awenne sone schulde slae me?' 'Whi, ame I thi sone?' þane quoþ Alexandire: 'ȝaa, for sothe,' quoþ Anetanabus, 'I gat the.'[41]

The *Prose Alexander*[42] begins with a man lying mortally wounded in a ditch. His assailant, Alexander, stands over him and throws insults upon his prostrate form. The man reveals that Alexander is his son, and then dies. There is a certain irony here for us as modern readers. The first few folios of the manuscript are missing—the beginning of the story is missing—in the same way that the beginning of Alexander's own life story

has been missing for him until this moment.[43] Alexander has not known until this point that Anectanabus is his father. This positions patrilineage as fragile and patriarchal succession as difficult to secure. As with Oedipus, the patriline is liable to mistake, which makes it vulnerable to unwitting patricide and unintended self-destruction. The revelation of Alexander's paternity also signals a potential gap between Alexander's own story of his life and what others might deem that life story to be. This gap suggests that narrative identity is a construct that is always evolving: at any point it is liable to retrospective revisions if new information is gained or if new insights into past events emerge.

The *Prose Alexander* is, therefore, another fifteenth-century prose romance that begins with patricide. As in the *Prose Thebes*, this patricide is a foundational moment that underpins the later narrative in particular ways. It does not, however, lead to the kinds of family difficulties found in the *Prose Thebes*. Rather, it seems to herald in a slow but methodically deliberate devolution, away from legitimate patriarchal identity toward a forward-looking construct that is constantly in process. The single central character of Alexander lends the *Prose Alexander* a strong first person focalization, even though it is not presented as a first person narrative. Alexander wants to be the supreme ruler of all the world. To achieve his ambition requires more than his legitimate patrilineal inheritance could ever provide. It requires more than military victory and imperial rule. It is also necessary to layer over the conquered world Alexander's own narrative, which not only casts him as entitled to such rule but also positions him as the universal maker of meaning. Alexander is presented as the author of his own story. While he cannot be an agent of his own fate—indeed it is made clear to him early in the text that he will die young—there is a layer of narrative presented in Alexander's voice that projects his own construction of his identity.

Through interpersonal exchanges with antagonists, either verbally or through letters,[44] Alexander presents politically charged constructions that narrativize and externalize his identity as an unfolding story that is strategic and purposeful. His care in this narrative construction is evidenced by his explicit claim to representational accuracy; he asserts that he will not take the title of king until he has defeated all his enemies: "þe name of kynge wille we noȝte take apon vs, before we hafe oure enemys vnder oure subieccioun" (p. 34, ll. 17–19). This not only indicates the reach of his ambition but also positions him as making a claim for the performative power of his own words. He taps into this power in the self-styled titles

that he uses in each formal meeting or correspondence. These titles shift over time from an acknowledged patriline to a carefully crafted heritage that supports his new identity as the emperor of the known world.

> 'Alexander…þe sone of Philippe, þe kynge of Macedoyne' (p. 9, ll. 28–29)
> 'Alexander, the sone of Philippe & of qwene Olympias' (p. 23, l. 18)
> 'Alexander the sone of godde Amone & qwene Olympias kyng of kynges & lorde of lordes' (p. 58, ll. 5–6)
> 'Kyng of kynges and lorde of lordes, Alexander þe sone of godde Amone & qwene Olympias' (p. 62, ll. 26–27)

Across these descriptors there is a two-step shift away from his legitimate father Philip. He identifies himself first as having a direct and singular connection with Philip as King of Macedonia. His identity is therefore at first cast entirely within the patriline. Once Philip dies, Alexander makes his first allusion to Olympias, his mother. By acknowledging a second parent he necessarily introduces another lineage, cutting his parental debt to Philip in half. He is now a product of two lineages. Moreover, the reference to place is dropped, which further reduces his connection to Philip. It also suggests a growing geopolitical claim that spreads beyond Macedonia, and it is played out as he continues to use this identifier through his successful campaigns across Greece, Italy, the north of Africa, the Levantine coast, and into Persia. After a long and bloody exchange, Alexander succeeds Darius as the emperor of Persia, which is his long-stated goal. At this point he drops his connection with Philip completely. He also skips any reference to Anectanabus, instead claiming the god Ammon as his natural father, in whose form Anectanabus seduced Olympias.[45] He notably keeps the reference to Olympias as his mother, thereby sustaining the matriline.

At this point, on securing Persia, Alexander adopts Darius's title of "kyng of kynges and lorde of lordes." While this signifies Alexander's succession to the throne of Persia, it is also the culmination of a father/son type of relationship that has developed over almost one half of the *Prose Alexander*.[46] From their first communication, when a message comes from Darius to seek a tribute payment from Philip, Alexander establishes a generational gap between himself and Darius, likening Darius to an old hen who has grown barren just as Alexander himself has come of age (p. 11, l. 34–p. 12, l. 1). Darius, in turn, calls Alexander a child who should "sett the in thi moder knee" (p. 21, ll. 32–33) and sends with his letter children's toys "in scorne" (p. 21, l. 2). In his reply Alexander maintains the hierarchy between them, claiming that if he were to defeat Darius then he would

have won a great victory over a powerful emperor, whereas for Darius there would be no glory in defeating him because he is only a mortal man (p. 24, ll. 7–12). As their epistolary relationship develops, interspersed with other conquests, their tones change little. Darius remains contemptuous even as he privately weeps as the tide of battle turns against him (p. 45, ll. 9–11), and Alexander sustains an even tone, making no claims for himself other than a virtuous heart (p. 43, l. 22) and offering warning against pride and vainglory (p. 43, ll. 22–26). Finally, when Darius lies dying, mortally wounded by two of his own men, he and Alexander meet at last. In this highly charged moment, their animosity falls away and they refer to each other as father and son. Darius twice calls Alexander his "dere sone" (p. 54, l. 33; p. 55, l. 20) and twice more his "sone" (p. 55, l. 34; p. 56, l. 7), and Alexander, holding the dying Darius in his arms, renounces his claim to Persia, stating that his foremost desire is to have Darius alive "as the son does the father."[47] The reconciliation between them results in Darius offering his daughter to Alexander in marriage. In this way Alexander takes Persia, but he does not take it by conquest; rather, his succession is legitimized by Darius himself, allowing Alexander to achieve the throne of Persia through rightful inheritance. The appellation "kyng of kynges and lorde of lordes" therefore not only denotes Alexander as the emperor of Persia but it is also the title that he inherits from another new father.

Alexander has many fathers—Philip, Anectanabus, Ammon, and finally Darius—fundamentally undermining the purity of a single paternal line. Indeed his legitimate patriline is flawed at the most essential level as he has both a natural father and a legitimate father. Yet, he narrates away these difficulties with an ease that betrays little interest in the conventions of social order. While he unwittingly kills his natural father, he deliberately elides both Anectanabus and Philip, instead assuming Anectanabus's false connection with a god and thereby replacing the problem of his human paternity with an inauthentic divine progenitor.[48] Moreover, he deliberately relegates his adopted father's legacy, sidelining Macedonia, and instead makes his father-in-law's Persian empire his crowning glory. He thereby constructs an alternative legitimacy that replaces both problematic human fathers. Further, Alexander makes a final tweak to his title, moving "kyng of kynges and lorde of lordes" to the front, thereby giving precedence to both his personal achievements and his connection with Darius above all other fathers. It would seem that he is more interested in the future than in the past. He then slides over the dubious divine connection ("the sone of godde Amone") in the middle of the list and gives the

emphasis of last place to his one remaining true human lineage ("qwene Olympias"). At the time of his death his sole remaining connection with his historical heritage is his matriline.

In these ways Alexander recasts his identity, eliding history, adopting a fantasy patrilineage and focusing on his own actions and achievements. This suggests a forward- and outward-looking perspective that also seems to be demonstrated in his vast travels. Yet when he leaves the known world and approaches new challenges—including strange beasts, treacherous terrain, trying weather conditions, and exotic communities with strange social structures—Alexander struggles. Moreover, his openness to new perspectives is limited. While he narrates his identity as one who is interested in philosophical conversations and debates,[49] his response to new social configurations is mixed.

Alexander's encounter with the Brahmans demonstrates that despite his stated wish to know and understand, his version of the world and of himself is too circumscribed and inflexible to allow for new interpretations from others. Dindimus shows a deeper understanding of Alexander's desires than Alexander does himself, noting that the Brahman ways of living are so different from Alexander's own that it is "impossible" to demonstrate them clearly to him. Nevertheless, Dindimus dutifully replies at great length, discussing the subsistence life of the Brahmans, their philosophy of austerity, their daily practices of abstinence, their non-hierarchical society, their lack of material possessions, and their love of peace. He then makes a point-by-point reading of Alexander's way of life based upon the Brahman philosophy, which, necessarily, presents a negative critique.[50] Unsurprisingly, Alexander is "wonder wrathe" ("exceedingly angry," p. 85, l. 4) at Dindimus's negative critique and he resentfully escalates the debate into a quarrel. Dindimus argues for the value of diversity, pointing out that all things are made by God.[51] Alexander, on the other hand, cannot accept an interpretive framework so different from his own. By way of closing off the debate, Alexander claims to have the power to make the Brahmans conform to his narrative of masculinity and empire, by forcing them into battle if he chooses to approach them with his army.[52]

Contrary to his avowed interest in wisdom, philosophical debate, knowledge, and learning, Alexander is only interested in narratives that reflect back to him his own view of the world. When faced with the significantly different worldview of the Brahmans, he wants them to yield to his own narrative. Unlike the many peoples he has already conquered across the known world, whom he has reduced to subjection through pillage and

destruction, he has no leverage over the Brahmans. They have no material possessions and do not even claim ownership of land. In answer to this difficulty, Alexander physically marks the earth at that place with his claim. He raises a pillar of marble upon which he inscribes his story in the learned languages of the classical world: Latin, Greek, and the "langage of Inde."

> I Alexander, Philippe son of Macedoyne after þe discomfytour & þe dedde of Darius & Porus come on werre vn-to this place. (p. 89, ll. 3–5)[53]

In response to the Brahmans' lack of recognition of his own narrative as supreme and with no other way to impose his story upon them, Alexander carves his story into stone and implants it upon the landscape. With the pillar he claims the land upon which it sits, and with the narrative carved upon it he claims all the land from Macedonia, through Persia, and India, to this place. By carving his story into the pillar, he stakes out a place in history, and in an act of cultural imperialism he imports the languages in which that history is written. This deeply symbolic act of power was brought about by Alexander's uncompromising stance in the face of what he sees as intolerable difference.

Despite this mode of imposing his own constructed narrative on the world, Alexander's travels reveal that even the enormity of his ambition has a limit. As noted above, Alexander remains true to his matrilineal heritage. His matriline is consistently presented, reappearing from time to time as though to remind the audience of its unshakeable certainty. In keeping with this appreciative recognition, he does not seek to impose his worldview upon the matriarchal society of the Amazons. His ambition to take over the world and dominate all societies seems unrelenting, but he meets the boundary of this desire and therefore of his identity when he meets the Amazon queen, Talifride. This episode is interesting not only in its difference from the narratives of masculine conquest that fill most of the rest of the *Prose Alexander*, but also in its difference from the treatment of the Amazons in other branches of the Alexander tradition.

Talifride is the only military opponent in the *Prose Alexander* to negotiate successfully with Alexander. She achieves this through a carefully staged discussion that does not confront him head on, in a battle of bluster and threat. Instead, she deflects conflict, considers the needs of both sides, and works toward a win-win outcome. Her first strategy is politeness. Unlike all the other engagements between Alexander and his opponents, she peppers her speech with polite forms using high levels of modality to soften her claims: "if it pleases you" and "perhaps."[54] Rather than presuming to

instruct him, she gestures to information "we sygnifie vn-to þe by oure lettres" ("we indicate to you by our letters" p. 66, ll. 24–25). She also acknowledges that she has heard of his "hye witt" (p. 65, l. 27), of his memory and foresight, and of his power to control the present. These moderating elements, with a bit of flattery thrown in, punctuate her letter and undercut the directness of her address, softening her tone and allowing her to make claims in a less threatening manner than the previously demonstrated masculine modes of exchange invariably express.

Once the tone is established, Talifride warns Alexander against indiscretion in a general way, and that shame was always visited upon those who made war against the Amazons. She describes their way of life based on the segregation of the sexes (except for one month of the year), the topographical safety of their island home, and their martial capacities. She then returns to the warning against shame, and makes clear the specific shame she has in mind. While she argues that her armies are committed and determined warriors, she does not claim that they are stronger than his. Rather, she argues that, if Alexander attacks them, he puts himself in a no-win position:

> If þou come agaynes vs we late the witt þat we wille feghte wit the at alle oure myȝte. And if it happene þat þu hafe þe victory of vs, wirchipe salle it nane be to the bi-cause þu hase discomfit womene. And if we discomfit the, it salle be an heghe wirchippe tille vs, þat we may discomfit so wirchipfulle an emperor; and to the it salle be a hye reproue. (p. 66, ll. 18–24)[55]

Embedded within the polite forms is a firm resistance based not on claims to martial superiority but on a shrewd logic. This is the same argument that Alexander himself presented to Darius at the beginning of their relationship, when Darius had the upper hand, but unlike Alexander's earlier attempt, here it is embedded within a discourse of politeness. Unlike Darius, Alexander responds positively; he does not get angry or abusive. Moreover, in contrast to all previous engagements where the other party tried to negotiate, Alexander does not crush the Amazons' temerity; instead, he acknowledges their difference. Indeed he goes so far as to say that "we lufe ȝour conuersacione" ("we love your manner of living").

Alexander and the Amazons come to an arrangement. He asks that they give him "sumwhat in name of tribute"; in other words, that they give "something *as a pretense of* tribute" (p. 67, l. 5), but he does not specify anything in particular. They assent, delivering a respectable gift of twenty horses and plentiful gold. Alexander then gives them horses to return safely

home. This suggests that the giving of tribute by the Amazons is a token. It is not really tribute, in terms of size and value, nor is it repeated yearly. Rather, it is a gesture of goodwill representing an agreement between them that it will constitute a semblance of tribute rather than being a tribute in fact. As such, this appearance of tribute will signify an appearance of subjection, rather than subjection in fact. This treatment of the Amazons is different to that found in other branches of the Alexander tradition. There are two standard narratives. In Alexander romance, the Amazons submit and pay yearly tribute, which might include gold, horses, women warriors, and even wives.[56] In the historical tradition, Thalestris, queen of the Amazons, seeks out Alexander in order to conceive a child with him. This suggests a more equal relationship than is offered in the romances generally;[57] however, there is still an implicit sexualization, which is absent from the *Prose Alexander*. In the *Prose Alexander* there is no sexual congress between the Amazons and Alexander or any of his men, nor is there any reference to it. The Amazons do not pay significant or yearly tribute, nor are their warriors absorbed into Alexander's army. In the *Prose Alexander* the Amazons remain independent. This is a somewhat paradoxical situation. On the one hand, by not requiring the Amazons to subjugate themselves to him, Alexander admits a boundary of his desire that is based upon gender. In other words, the difference that he recognizes in the Amazons—that makes them different from himself and thereby marks the border of his identity—is gender. In this way gender underpins his identity. However, traditional conceptions of gender are also problematized by the very existence of a female militaristic society, let alone one that can produce a queen who can beat Alexander at his own rhetorical game.

Alexander's identity is a narrative and rhetorical construct. He recasts his past, eschewing his human patrilineage, replacing it with a fantasy of divinity that legitimates his imperial progression across the known and unknown worlds.[58] He will not tolerate any challenge to it, forcing his interpretation upon others and disallowing alternative interpretations. Those he cannot physically subdue, such as the Brahmans, become subject to a discursive violence: he casts the Brahmans as uncivilized and irreligious. Then, even though it means nothing within their cultural framework, he makes his imperial mark in language and in stone on their landscape. The limit to Alexander's narrative identity, the boundary of his desire to subjugate, is gender. His matriline is both secure and beyond doubt; there is no vulnerability or ambiguity, and he celebrates it throughout his life. Similarly, he accepts the way of life of the matriarchal Amazons without

appropriation or challenge, even though this matriarchal martial society usurps the social conventions around gender that pertained in western Europe at that time. The other versions demean the Amazons through sexualization, subjugation, or both, carefully containing the transgressive threat that their way of life poses. In the *Prose Alexander*, however, the matriarchy of the Amazons runs in parallel with the patriarchal world, next to Alexander's own world, like an independent sister. This is significant, not only because he acknowledges the limit of his identity but also because such a boundary between himself and another means that he concedes, at last, that there is another self who is beyond his narrative control. There is another unique existent who has her own narrative identity.

In the *Prose Alexander* accidental patricide does not lead to family implosion or social disorder. Rather, it signals of a shift in the focus of identity. The narrative of identity has moved away from patrilineage and toward individual capacity and achievement. It has moved from inheritance to innovation. The acknowledgement of the matriline is not only a recognition of the certainty of maternity, rather than the ambiguity of paternity, it is also a recognition of generation and origination, of production of the new rather than reproduction of the old. Moreover, the limit of gender introduced by the encounter with the Amazons suggests strange new potentialities of social order. In this way, Alexander's narrative of taking over the world is a consideration of identity and its construction, which privileges outward movement; and the new discoveries that can be found as a result. It highlights the power of narrative to remake meaning, but it also problematizes the tendency to universalize that meaning. While Alexander acknowledges difference in gender, the narrative of the *Prose Alexander* acknowledges other differences that Alexander himself cannot accept, as evidenced by the episode of the Brahmans. The *Prose Alexander* therefore seems to imply an audience that would recognize Alexander's shortcomings, an audience that is aware of the operation of strategic narratives, and most importantly an audience that understands the problematic tensions of conquest.

The Marriage Tales in *Melusine*

Madame, yf ye vouchesaaf, it were wel tyme that we shuld go fourth to our vyage, for to knowe the Countrees feree & straunge, Wherby we may acquyre honour & good renommee in straunge marches, to thend that we lerne & vnderstand the dyuerse langages of the world. Also yf Fortune and

good auenture wyl be propyce & conuenable to vs, we haue wel the wyll & courage to subdue & conquere Countrees & landes; For we considere & see that alredy we be eyghte bretheren/and are lyke, yf god wyl, to be yet as many moo in tyme commyng. (*Melusine*, p. 107, l. 31–p. 108, l. 8)

In The Marriage Tales, four of Melusine's sons go out into the world.[59] The four brothers recognize that there is not enough in the family legacy to go around the many sons, and so they avoid arguments before they begin by choosing to go out into the world in search of honor and worship. These four Luisgnan brothers leave their claims to landed inheritance behind. Instead, they carry with them two overt signs of their matrilineal heritage: the facial monster marks and their matronymic war cry "Lusignan." An outward-looking focus is privileged in the text, and those who pursue it are rewarded. Leaving patrimony behind, however, is not an option available to everyone. Those who cannot escape it remain vulnerable to its negative legacies, not only in the horizontal violence that divides brother from brother, which the Lusignans avoid, but also in the vertical violence between father and child.

By this time in the narrative of *Melusine*, the father–daughter relationship has already been signaled as fraught. Indeed, both Melusine and her husband, Raimondin, are guilty of patricide-like crimes and have been alienated from their patriline. Raimondin's act, however, is largely innocent. In his indirect patricide he is trying to save his uncle from a wild boar, as noted in Chapter 1. This unintended killing does not signal a problematic father–son relationship or ambiguous patriline, but it does disrupt patrilineal connections nevertheless. It results in a secret (the secret of his crime) that alienates Raimondin forever from his paternal family connections and ties him to Melusine.[60] Melusine, on the other hand, is not innocent by any measure. She deliberately takes revenge upon her known father, imprisoning him in a mountain to punish him for his betrayal of her mother (and indirectly herself). He dies in this prison. It is Melusine's vengeful act that signals a specifically problematic relationship between father and daughter. Unlike those in the *Prose Thebes* and the *Prose Alexander*, Melusine's act is neither an accident nor an issue of ambiguous identity. Rather, it is a direct response to patriarchal appropriation of the maternal space.[61] Through this act Melusine rejects her legitimate father and effects a break with patrimony and patriline. The result is the taboo imposed by her mother, through which Melusine establishes her own family. As discussed in previous chapters, Melusine is the main actor in her marriage to Raimondin and their subsequent life. She builds cities,

cultivates land, and develops a social structure within her community. She builds a dynasty centered around her eponymously named castle, Lusignan, celebrated through the matronym that her sons carry with them on their travels throughout the known world. Even Raimondin adopts the name Lusignan. In this way Melusine sidelines the patriline once again. Between the first and second generations, therefore, the problematic relationship is between father and daughter unlike the father-and-son relationships of the *Prose Thebes* and the *Prose Alexander*. And yet, intended or otherwise, in all these instances—Melusine, Raimondin, Pollymet and Alexander—the patriarchal inheritance of identity and patrimony is pushed aside.

In *Melusine*, the father/daughter problem re-emerges once again between the second and third generations.[62] Moreover, it is again an issue of ownership and appropriation of female bodies and the reproductive space. Each of The Marriage Tales tells the story of a young woman who marries one of Melusine's sons. Each of these young women is fifteen years old and the sole heir to a kingdom or a duchy. Each is either orphaned or on the verge of being so. Three of them are besieged by unwanted suitors. It is the standard topos of the damsel in distress.[63] In going to the rescue, the Lusignan brothers break from their own inheritance, which is legally, if not in any practical sense, still patrimony.[64] They help secure the heiresses' patrimony, but in doing so reveal the violence of that legacy. Notably, the narrative itself kills off the fathers who would enact inter-generational violence against their daughters. Killing off the father wipes the slate clean: it makes way for a new generation. While at first glance The Marriage Tales appear to be the usual tales of rescue, a closer look reveals that the surface narrative is fractured by moments of gendered violence and disjunctive critique that tell a different story of feminine rescue, the "straunge" otherness of far-off lands, and Christian chivalry as a masculine interpretive mode.

Ermynee, Eglantyne, and Florie: The Violence of Feminine Rescue

These three tales depict varying degrees of violence against daughters, directly or indirectly, through the patriarchal process of passing crown, land, people, and daughter directly from the hands of the father to those of the son-in-law.

In the tale of Ermynee, the first of The Marriage Tales, this process is particularly painful because the heroine is portrayed as intelligent and knowledgeable and is acknowledged as such by her father, with whom she

has a close bond. She is characterized, over a number of passages, as an inquisitive and determined young woman who knows her own mind and has the respect of the people. In her first appearance she is inscribed as having "grete langyng & desyre to knowe the veray trouth of all" (p. 125, ll. 17–18). Ermynee uses the resources at her disposal to full effect as she actively seeks out information about the battles going on outside the city walls: her interrogation of her father's messenger about "that folke that commeth to socoure my fader" continues for over a page (p. 125, l. 19–p. 126, l. 24). She also has her own sources of information that keep her abreast of the rumors circulating within the city (p. 134, ll. 24–27). The king himself regards her as an interested party, sending his messenger to her— unprompted—to keep her informed (p. 134, ll. 19–20). The people hold her in esteem, lamenting that they would be left in "grete orpha-nite" (p. 147, l. 24) should she die from grief when the king is mortally wounded. Such a view positions her as the true heir of Cyprus.

Ermynee is also actively desiring. After a night of fevered restlessness, she concludes that regardless of his strange looks, Urian's prowess and generosity make him worthy of the daughter of the highest king (p. 135, ll. 19–29). Judith Weiss proposes that there are three stages in a hero's career, each of which attracts a different kind of love from a wooing woman.[65] The first stage attracts love based on looks alone, before the hero has done anything of worth—before he "deserves" love. The second stage attracts love based on prowess, when he first displays what might become a chivalric identity. Love at either the first or the second stage could inhibit the hero's development. In the third stage not only has the hero proven his prowess but he has also distinguished himself repeatedly. Such a hero has a fully formed chivalric identity. His reputation is such that it precedes him, and the lady falls in love with him by hearsay. Ermynee does not fall in love with Urian because of his beauty, or by being impressed with an exhibition of his prowess, but for the reputation that he has built up through the campaign to save Cyprus. She falls in love through hearsay: "the well that it was said of him." Following Weiss's argument, Ermynee's love does not present a hindrance to Urian's acquisition of honor. Rather, he has already proven himself and deserves to be loved. Ermynee's love for Urian comes about because she recognizes his worth, and it is this recognition that makes her love worth having. She is right for him, and he is right for her (although he does not know it yet). Events seem to be proceeding positively for Ermynee when after the successful campaign her father secures the hero as a husband for his daughter.

Ermynee's agentive approach to the world, however, is brought into sudden and violent check by the mortal wound her father receives in battle. Her father's approaching death coupled with her impending marriage to Urian causes a vacillation of mind so great that she can not sleep (p. 150, l. 15) and she becomes susceptible to physical collapse (pp. 150, 154). This drives Ermynee to seek a delay to the wedding. Despite her evident suffering, however, the king disables her yet further by insisting upon a speedy marriage:

> And after he dide make come the archebysshop of the Cite that asuryd them togidre. But Ermyne said she wold see first the termynacion of her faders syknes or she shuld procide ony ferther....Thenne was the kyng woofull & dolaunt, and said: "Fayre doughter Ermyne, ye shew wel [th]at lytel ye loue me, whan that thinge which I desire moost to see afore myn ende ye ne wyl acomplysshe. Now wel I see that ye desyre my deth." (p. 156, ll. 12–22)

Prior to this speech there is no mention of the king's wish for Ermynee and Urian to marry before his death, and yet the king speaks as though it were known. He speaks as though it should have been anticipated by such a sufficiently attentive observer as his daughter is duty-bound to be. By crafting his wish as something that could be anticipated by another, he disassociates it from his own subjective position—from his own body—and constructs it as a kind of universal, even though it is the result of a personal bodily need. Further, he elevates the status of his wish by framing it in the terms of a dying wish, making it impossible to refuse. The expression of Ermynee's desire thus becomes an implicit refusal to grant him this dying wish, which would indeed be the ultimate betrayal of daughterly duty. As he universalizes his desire, he narrows hers to the personal and undutiful. As he disassociates himself from his body, he simultaneously reduces her to body, and such a diminution she must and does accept: "there nys thing in the world that I shuld reffuse you vnto myn owne deth/commande you me your playsire" (p. 156, ll. 25–27).

In the fourth marriage tale Eglantyne is similarly imposed upon. While in mourning for her father, who has been killed and whose body sacrilegiously cremated by Zelodius of Craco, she is unwilling to enter into a rushed marriage. Her uncle, however, has a different perspective, and he progressively and relentlessly diminishes Eglantyne to silence and surface. Three verbal exchanges between them confirm the process. Over two pages she submits to him three times, each time speaking fewer words than before:

'My right dere vncle, I ne haue noon of Counseyll & comfort but you/so
I requyre you that of good remedye ye purueye therto. And conuenable &
lawful it is that I obey you more than ony other personne in the world, & so
wyl I doo.' (p. 237, ll. 13–18)

'right dere vncle, all my trust, my hoop & comfort is in god & in you, wherfor
doo with me & with my reaume what it playse you' (p. 238, ll. 23–25)
      'Dere vncle, doo therof al your playsyre.' (p. 238, ll. 34–5)

Eglantyne's linguistic subjecthood disappears across these three speeches.
In the first speech she uses "I" four times—she is the actor, requiring,
obeying, and doing. In the second speech her claim to the first person
"I" has gone. She exists in abstract terms ("my trust, my hoop & com-
fort") and only in relation to masculine others ("God" and "you"). As
she speaks the subject position moves away from her to her uncle, and by
the second half of this speech she has become the grammatical object, the
one acted upon. In the third speech she does not exist at all. Her uncle
alone appears, and he is as an actor with an unrestricted range. Her uncle's
speeches, however, become overwhelmingly and oppressively long. No
longer an active participant, she has no capacity to resist. In the end she is
reduced to mere surface, an envelope of identity with no substance:

And fourthwith the kynge & the Duc Ode yede & fette the pucelle, and
despoylled her of her dueyl & black clothing/and syn was arayed ful rychely
of her noblest raymentes, and acompanyed with her ladyes & damoyselles,
she was conueyed by the forsaid lordes vnto the presence of the noble breth-
eren, whiche merueylled moche of her grete beaute (p. 239, ll. 12–19).

Her uncle and Duc Ode do everything; Eglantyne does nothing. She is
undressed and dressed by them, and with this change of clothing—of cov-
ering—she is literally remade. At their hands the transformation of her
appearance is so great that the Lusignan brothers "merueylled" as though
they had never seen her before. This new "beaute" they see is, necessarily,
entirely in her "raymentes." As an object without agency Eglantyne can
do nothing. She cannot even walk to her prospective husband but must be
"conueyed" by her patriarchal representatives. She must be passed on to
her husband by her uncle, who has already given her and her realm to him.
    In these tales even though Ermynee and Eglantyne marry the men of
their choice, the question of handover is the significant point. It would
seem that the princesses *must* be handed from man to man, from father/
father-figure to son-in-law. The process of handover elides the princess as

a participant in the exchange. The urgency of the father's/father-figure's desire to ensure that the princess is so elided is betrayed by the violence he is prepared to inflict upon her to achieve his goal. This gendered violence is laid bare in the tales not only in the work involved in achieving the princesses' submission but also in the suffering of the princesses in that submission. It would seem that he deems her suffering an acceptable price to pay to avoid the apparent vulnerability of a break in the continuity of male leadership; in other words, it is an acceptable price to secure his own desire for seamless patriarchal succession. Nevertheless, the tale of Ermynee undercuts this logic by suggesting not only Ermynee's capacity as a potential leader, but also the people's confidence in that capacity. The tale of Christine, discussed below, similarly belies this view.

The violence of commodification is brought to its logical conclusion in the tale of Florie, in which the princess suffers no distress but disappears.[66] In this tale, the city of Cruly is not under siege, so there is no crisis of timing to negotiate. Instead, the tale appears to depict a romantic and courtly ideal, in which Guyon plays the part of the courtly suitor and Florie the beloved, and yet, Florie is almost too ready, her compliance almost too perfect. There is no apparent individualization; unlike with Ermynee or Eglantyne, she expresses no opinion. There seems to be nothing beneath her pretty surface.

Guyon arrives in Cruly, and he spends a pleasant evening with the Armenian princess Florie, who has been instructed by her father to entertain him. After an evening of "honeste & gracyous talkyng" of "grete solace & joye," Guyon is on the verge of "dyscouer[ing] his thoughte to her," but he is called away just before he comes to the point. Accordingly, he "humbly" offers himself as her champion and later sends her the spoils of his victory. Guyon has behaved perfectly but revealed nothing of himself. While he has the potential and apparently the intention to do so, he does not. The implied honesty or frankness, that the appropriate level of intimacy should inevitably reveal, does not materialize. The text makes no further mention of his thoughts or feelings. The text does not use the word "love" even once in relation to him. Florie, on the other hand, is a more animated figure. On hearing of the coming of the strangers she and her maidens rush off to dress lavishly for the occasion. It is twice noted how happy she is at the prospect of visitors—she is "ryght glad & joyous of the commyng of the straungers," and she "moch desired theire commyng"— even before she knows who they might be. She enjoys Guyon's company, and when he is called away "her herte was fylled with dueyl & sorowe" (p. 164, l. 1). When Guyon sends the spoils of his victorious battle to her

and her father, the texts bursts forth with three instances of the word "joye" in the space of three lines.[67] Moreover, the word "love" is used twice in describing Florie's feelings for Guyon: "she…louyngly beheld guyon" and "she loued so entierly guyon." Without any apparent discrimination, Florie seems ready to love any worthy knight who comes along.[68]

Soon after, Florie's father, ailing and close to death, enters into negotiations with Urian to secure Guyon as her husband. As far as it goes, fortune (in the form of her father) seems to be operating in her favor: she gets what she apparently wants without even having to speak it. The French text then goes on smoothly. Guyon accepts the offer of her hand graciously and returns to Cruly where Florie welcomes him back. Their greeting reveals a personal concern that hints at an established intimacy, and her words of thanks for his war booty draw the audience back to that moment in the text when she was described as being in love.[69] The treatment of this episode in the Middle English text is somewhat different. After so successful a beginning, in which a relation based upon love might be expected to develop, Guyon returns to Cruly to marry Florie, but the meeting and the conversation depicted in the French text are not reproduced in the Middle English version. Florie is not seen to welcome him back, and there is no renewal of their "gracious talkings." Indeed, in the Middle English text Florie is almost silent throughout the tale. Her words are described in indirect speech, and her love is presented in the third person. As noted in Chapter 2, any lessening of feminine activity and/or speech in the English version of a French text is contrary to expectation. The English tradition did not adopt the conventions of courtliness as wholeheartedly as the French, so love and the female beloved are not idealized to the same degree in the English tradition.[70] The English tradition, therefore, leaves the path open for a more active participation by women in narratives of love.[71] However, the English translator of this tale—the tale of Melusine, a most active and powerful woman—chooses to write out Florie.

Previous chapters have discussed the importance of a private place or autonomous space for women in their search for a meaningful subjecthood—in space and time, in society and in history. While the text hints at a private place beneath Guyon's courtly exterior that intimacy might at least partly reveal, the figure of Florie betrays no hint of a private place. On the contrary, she is fully revealed to us. She is happy and gay, she takes pleasure in visitors, and she is ready for any worthy knight who comes along. There is no crisis or drama in her tale. Unlike Ermynee or Eglantyne, at no point does she need to practice significant restraint

or camouflage strong feelings. Nor is there any point at which she must exercise agency; she does not even have to voice her desire for Guyon. There is no moment in this tale when Florie steps outside the scope of expected and appropriate behavior, nor any moment or thought that even hints at an interiority. At no point does the text betray an existence for Florie beneath her compliant exterior. She is what she appears to be: she is completely revealed and nothing remains. Florie is both objectified and abstracted by the actualization of her own love. She is entirely subsumed within the love relation. She disappears because there is nothing of herself that is sustained. She thus offers herself up for consumption. Ermynee and Eglantyne, on the other hand, exist elsewhere. While they are each diminished and their subjecthood almost annulled in their enforced submission, the very fact that enforcement is required reminds us that they are both more than that to which they are momentarily reduced. For Florie, however, there is nothing more than what appears to be, and by the end of her tale she is no longer visible.

The actions of Guyon on his marriage to Florie displace her further from the position of protagonist:

> There was guyon wedded with Florye/and after the feste all the barons of the land came to Cruly & made theyre homage to guyon, whiche crownned himself king & regned honourably. (p. 181, ll. 1–4)[72]

In taking the crown and placing it on his own head—another element in the tale that occurs only in the Middle English version—Guyon elides the necessary connection between Florie and his kingmaking. Without Florie he would not be king, and yet she is not in attendance. She becomes the site of an effaced exploitation. The story of Guyon, on the other hand, is one of ascendancy. He begins as a younger brother, but his (apparent) love for a princess (implicitly) inspires his prowess with which he wins wars and booty and consequently her hand/body/land. He graciously accepts the dead king's offer, marries the princess, seizes the crown, and with his own hands casts himself as king. Guyon's attitude of easy entitlement prefigures the behavior of the later King of Armenia in his abortive exchange with Melior, discussed in the previous chapter. Guyon's marriage makes him King of Armenia, and it is his direct descendant who tries to take Melior as his wife. Melior, of course, is not an easy mark like Florie. She will take no man as a husband. Moreover, Melior has magical powers to realize her wishes. Guyon and his descendant, through their actions, betray

a disrespect for women—their voices, their knowledges, and their subject-hood—and it is this betrayal that ultimately brings down the House of Lusignan.

Urian and Regnauld, on the other hand, work to reinstate feminine subjecthood. They realign gender relations as a process of continual and productive exchange. Urian and Regnauld seek to recuperate and resusci-tate their wives from the violence of their abjection, by reasserting the sig-nificance of their role as co-leaders and their capacity as agents of action. When the King of Cyprus offers Urian his daughter in marriage, and the realm with her, Urian responds:

> Thenne enclyned Uryan byfore the kyng wher he laye, and toke the croune and putte it in Ermynes lap, sayeng/'Damoyselle, it is your, and sith it hath fortuned thus with me, I shall you helpe to kepe it my lyf naturel, yf it playse god ayenst al them that wold vsurpe it or putte it in subgection'. (pp. 155–56, ll. 31–11)

Urian's action of placing the crown in Ermynee's lap and promising to help her keep it returns to her the status of actor (as possessor) and differ-entiates her from the crown as that which is acted upon (as possessed). In the tale of Eglantyne, Regnauld similarly repositions his new wife in rela-tion to the crown and also as a participant in the economy of marital and amorous exchange. In a private post-nuptial exchange Eglantyne begins by humbling herself as the rescued and unworthy orphan. Regnauld responds:

> dere herte, & my best beloued, ye haue do moche more for me than euer I dide ne possible is to me to doo for you/sene & consydered the noble yefte youen by you to me/that is your noble lady/and yet besyde that of your noble royame ye haue endowed me/and with me nought ye haue take/sauf only my symple body. (p. 242, ll. 2–9)

Regnauld expresses surprise at Eglantyne's unnecessary humility, recog-nizing in her not only agency, but an agency more extensive than his own: "ye haue do moche more for me than euer I dide ne possible is to me to doo for you." He describes her as a beneficent actor ("youen by you to me," "ye haue endowed me") whose gifts are "noble," while he has "naught" except his "symple" body, and again she is the actor as this is not for him to give but for her to take. Importantly, he separates her as agent from her own body, which allows her to give her body without

compromising her own subjecthood. The cumulative effect of the actions and the words of Urian and Regnauld is that these Lusignan brothers do not expect, nor even desire, submission. They seek a mutuality of exchange with their spouses, acknowledging their capacity to operate as protagonists in the economies of political and amorous exchange. In this way Urian and Regnauld do more than rescue the maidens. They configure a different relation between the sexes and thereby project a different future for relationships of difference.

Even without these actions the tales of Ermynee and Eglantyne have provided sufficient evidence to establish for these princesses an existence that exceeds their curtailed, public selves. While they are each almost eradicated in the processes of their enforced submission, the very fact of this enforcement reminds us that they are more than that to which they are momentarily reduced. They exist somewhere else—for themselves, within themselves. They have an interiority that must be repressed for their submission to continue, an interiority that Urian and Regnauld seek to release. For Florie, however, there is nothing more than appears. She betrays no interiority. Her surface identity is, therefore, easily co-opted for the purposes of celebrating chivalric glory and nothing remains.

Christine: The Sovereign Woman

This tale, the third of The Marriage Tales, is different from the other three in that Christine, Duchess of Luxembourg, is a woman alone. She is unencumbered by a father, uncle, or other patriarchal figure, and within her duchy no one can legitimately deny her participation as a full protagonist in the politicized marriage economy. Moreover, as an agentive subject she is not easily imposed upon by patriarchal discourses that make meanings to serve their own ends. Christine lifts the veil of chivalric discourse that cloaks violence with heroic glamour, and the narrative of her tale itself cuts through fantasies of Christian unity in the face of the Saracen threat.

The woman sovereign provides a potential opening for the sovereign woman. Christine asserts her sovereignty over herself as well as her land by refusing the King of Anssay's offer of marriage. Consequently, he makes war on Luxembourg. Christine's barony is fully supportive of her right to the choice she has made,[73] and even when the battle is going against them, like Christine, they are more determined than ever to fight to the end.[74] Finally they send to Lusignan for help. The King of Anssay's siege of Luxembourg

is interpreted in Lusignan, as it has been by Christine's barony, as a personal attack of sexual violence.[75] As threatened rape and ravishment the attack invokes that tenet of Christian chivalry which requires good knights to protect women alone, a code which is rearticulated by Melusine before she sends her sons off into the world: "kepe wel ye rauysshe no woman" (p. 111, ll. 29–30).[76] The legitimacy of the project to defend Christine against the king is further enforced by the magic ring, which Anthony carries with him to the battle: the ring ensures victory only in a rightful cause. The upholding of Christine's will is therefore a rightful cause.

Chivalry effects Christine's rescue, but she also critiques it. The winning battle scene offers a pertinent example of this contrast between celebration and censure. When Anthony arrives to be Christine's champion against the King of Anssay, the structure of the engagement starts to shift. It was a battle of wills between the sexes—between his desire and her refusal of it—whereas now it is a battle between two men, bringing Christine (and her duchy) perilously close to the objectification of being the prize for the winner. She is rapidly moving from being a participant in the exchange to becoming the object of exchange itself. Her removal from the action seems complete when we find a knight mediating between Christine and the battle. The knight, presumably her bodyguard, is positioned as the controller of the threshold of her refuge. He stands between Christine and the battle. He looks out of the window, interpreting the scene, and chooses the appropriate moment to call her thither. When Anthony and his armies arrive, and the battle turns in their favor, the knight calls Christine to the window to join him in surveying at a safe distance the prowess and beauty of the noble brothers who bring her succor:[77]

> My lady, come hither & see the floure of knyghthod, of prowesse & hardynes/come & see honour in his siege royall, & in his mageste/come & see the god of armes in propre figure.' 'Frend,' said the pucelle/ 'what is that ye say to me?' 'I calle you,' sayd the knight, 'to come hither & see the flour of noblesse & of all curtoysye, that fro ferre land is come hither for to fyght with your enemyes for to kepe your honour, your lande, & your peple/ this are the two children of Lusynen, that be come for to deffend you ayenst the king of Anssay & all his puyssaunce, and to putte theire honour & lyf in auenture for to kepe your honour sauf. (p. 201, l. 25–p. 202, l. 5)

In this speech Christine and Anthony are constructed within a hierarchy based upon a string of gendered binarisms: movement/stasis, activity/passivity, danger/safety, even divine/human, underlining the fundamental

binary, masculine/feminine. This is the masculine discourse of chivalry talking. The Lusignan brothers are described in superlative terms (they are "the floure of knyghthod, of prowesse & hardynes," "the flour of nobless & of all curtoysye"), in regal terms ("royall," "mageste"), and even in divine terms ("the god of armes").[78] Christine is described without enthusiasm, without adjectives ("your honour, your lande, & your peple"). The honor of the brothers and Christine are also differently configured: "putte theire honour & lyf in auenture for to kepe your honour sauf." Their honor is not located in their bodies; its separateness is indicated by the extra mention of their bodily lives, which can in fact be lost without tarnishing their honor. In contrast, Christine's honor is located in her body, and she is positioned as passive and defenseless. Action is strictly a masculine business. The knight describes the brothers as coming to act with their honor and their lives. The brothers are the linguistic subjects of a series of timeless and therefore endlessly potential actions (through the infinitives "to fyght…to kepe…to deffend…to kepe") of which Christine (in the form of her honor, her land, and her people) is the beneficiary. The meaning of specific words used to delineate movement also changes according to the gender of the mover. The Lusignans have "come hither" from a "ferre land," whereas when the knight asks Christine to "come hither," he is asking her to move a few feet to the window.

Despite this extraordinary chivalric splendor, the knight has difficulty in engaging Christine's attention. He must repeat his call for her to come to the window: "'Frend,' said the pucelle/'what is that ye say to me?'" Moreover, when she does look out, Christine's eyes see an entirely different scene from that described by the knight:

> Thenne came the mayde at the wyndowe, & beheld the mortal batayll & horryble medlee…"O Veray god, what shall doo this pouere orphenym/ bettre it had be that I had drowned myself, or that I had be putte to deth in some other wyse, or elles that I had be deed when I yssued out of my moders wombe/than so many creatures shuld be slayne & perysshe for myn owne synne." (p. 202, ll. 5–13)

At the moment of victory, when the masculine teleology of chivalry is coming to its point, Christine overturns expectations, implicitly critiquing chivalry. For Christine a discourse of idealization does not intercede to sanitize violence. There is no mediation, no separation: she is right there in the midst of the conflict. Her words reflect the immediacy of her experience, contrasting with the celebratory tone of the knight. She sees

a "mortal batayll & horryble medlee" where he sees "honour in his siege royall." Instead of aligning herself with the might of the Lusignans in their "mageste," or as the beneficiary of their protection, she identifies herself as the cause of others' suffering. While she puts herself in the subject position grammatically, she is not the actor. Rather, she is making an inarguable calculation: that her own life is worth less than the multitude of "so many creatures" that lay slain before her. In this way Christine looks at the battlefield differently, and in the movement, the action, she sees only death.

This critique, if only momentarily, problematizes the whole chivalric enterprise. It reveals that there is more than one possible reading of the scene, which necessarily makes all readings partial and dependent upon point of view. This process of repositioning destabilizes the knight's pleasure of the visual spectacle and pushes it to the brink of sadistic fetish. As Richard Kaeuper explains: "chivalry meant the worship of prowess, and prowess (whatever gentler qualities idealists wanted to associate with it) meant beating an opponent with really good hacking and thrusting."[79] It is the "hacking and thrusting," that is foregrounded by Christine's commentary, rather than the idealized "gentler qualities," that the knight sees amidst the bloodthirsty exchange. Christine's words explicitly lift the veil of idealization: her words make the violence plain and shocking. At least for this short time, violence is deglamorized and chivalric discourse undercut.

As noted above, the tale of Christine is unique in this series. Christine is a woman alone: as with the other princesses, she has no mother, but she also has no father, uncle, or other patriarchal representative. She is of necessity a participant in this economy, and a fully active participant she proves to be. Moreover, unlike the other princesses who are all pursued by "paynims" or "saracyns,"[80] Christine is pursued by the King of Anssay, who is a Christian king.[81] In The Marriage Tales there are repeated engagements with the Saracen other. In the tales of Ermynee and Eglantyne predatory Saracens have the princesses under siege, and in the tale of Florie the Saracen threat is closing in on the orphaned princess. In the tale of Christine, however, the Christian King of Anssay replaces the Saracen as unwanted suitor, drawing a troubling parallel between Christian and Saracen desire. The narrative repetition is clear: the rejected Sultan of Damascus besieges Ermynee in Famagosse, the rejected King of Anssay besieges Christine in Luxembourg, and Zelodius of Craco besieges Eglantyne in Prague. The king's actions are identical to, and framed by, the actions of the two Saracens. This equivalence between the king's

and the Saracens' actions negates some of the otherness of the Saracen; it negates at least the operation of otherness across masculine desiring bodies. The King of Anssay, a Christian, enacts the same violence as the Saracen. Christian chivalry, not able to effect a different kind of knight, is thereby destabilized.

Indeed the difference between the Saracens and the Christian knights throughout the romance is located in religion alone. While they call on different gods, in all other respects the Saracen knights are depicted in the same way as the Lusignan knights. They wear the same armor, use the same weapons, and pitch their camps and conduct their warfare in the same way. Their leaders are individuated through naming and first person speech in which they discuss strategy, rally their men, and express disappointment and disillusionment, just as any Christian leader would do. The Caliph of Bandas laments: "For wel I see that Fortune slepeth as to our help/and so hath he doo long/but fauourable & moche propice it is as now to crysten peple" (p. 168, ll. 8–10). Some of them are less than honorable, but so are Raimondin's vassals, the brothers Claude and Guyon of Syon, who rebel against his lordship and plunder the innocent (pp. 246ff.). Some are more than honorable in some ways but not in others. As he fights against the Sultan who has wrongly pursued Ermynee, Urian praises his valor: "By my feyth, it is grete pyte & dommage that yonder Turcke byleueth nat on god, For he is moche preu & valyaunt of his hand" (p. 145, ll. 14–17). On the whole the Saracens are no worse than the Christians in the romance—some of whom are good, some not so good—and others, sometimes good and sometimes not. Therefore, while the link between the King of Anssay and the Sultan of Damascus reveals a commonality in transgressive behavior (and perhaps even transgressive desire), such a link also domesticates otherness. Moreover, unlike in some romances where Saracens can be monstrous or even demonic,[82] here there is no bodily difference to be exploited. They are not so other because they are not so different.

The bodily difference that does exist, of course, is between the Lusignan brothers on the one hand and the King of Anssay and the Saracens on the other. The Lusignans, who are the heroes of the piece—even Guyon, who is the worst of them, is better than both the King of Anssay and the Saracens—are heavily marked with otherworldly signifiers before they even leave home. Melusine's hybrid nature is played out across the surface of her sons' bodies in the mother-marks each of them bears. These marks, that would ordinarily be considered substantially disfiguring (a third eye

or a single eye, a lion's paw birthmark on the face, large fang-like teeth, a nose on top of the head, and so on), are highly visible markers of marvelous maternity.[83] Further, each son bears his mother's name ("Vrian of Lusynen," p. 161, l. 30; "Anthony & Regnald of Lusynen," p. 188, ll. 33, and so on). The simple act of eponymously naming her foundational castle Lusignan thereby sends out ripples of the transgressive force of her otherworldly power. Through this act she indirectly marks her children with her own name, eliding their paternity and foregrounding the maternal line, which they proudly repeat as their battle cry across Europe, the eastern Mediterranean, and western Asia.[84] The mother-mark and the matronym are therefore double markers of monstrous maternal lineage, but they have no negative outcomes. No one makes reference to the naming other than as a cheer or a call for help, and no one is concerned about the monstrous marks. Everyone finds the brothers admirable and even beautiful. Indeed the double inflection of their bodily monstrosity and their fairy matrilineage signifies an exceptionality that works only for good. The troubling potential of Melusine's bodily ambiguity, as unstable and transgressive, has dissipated. Bodily integrity no longer signifies consistently, which necessarily means it cannot signify at all. The intensification of the markers of maternity, of the matriline, becomes the story of origin for the Lusignan line in generations to come.

It would seem, therefore, that monstrosity, hybridity, and, by extension, bodily difference more generally are recuperated through the honor and chivalry of the Lusignan brothers. This not only has implications later in the tale for Melusine herself but also flows through to the actions of the brothers when faced with unlooked-for prosperity in the form of socially and politically elevating marriages. Faced with the offer of wives who are cast as the victor's prize, two of the brothers behave with surprising sensitivity to their wives' reduced state. Small but significant gestures that the brothers offer to their new wives work to return to them the subjecthood that the patriarchal economy has stripped away. Ermynee and Eglantyne are reduced to objects of exchange by their well-meaning father figures. With desires stymied and voices silenced, the violence of their enforced passivity is palpable. The brothers, whose very bodies undermine the fiction of unified identity and seamless patriarchal progression, return to their wives their own identities and their own lineage. Furthermore, Christine's husband, Regnauld, claims naming rights only over a son, implicitly granting his wife naming rights over a daughter.[85] In this way, in addition to

recuperating their own maternal heritage, the brothers recuperate the feminine in and of itself, for itself and for its own lineage, for every mother's daughter. This is, after all, a logical outcome of recuperation of the maternal line: to recuperate maternity is to recuperate a mother, which is necessarily to recuperate a woman.

The Marriage Tales therefore experiment with the other by bringing alterity to the core. Melusine is a hybrid woman/fairy with an explicit monstrosity. At the center of the tale she is always a force for good, despite the hybridity of her form and her nature. But it is in The Marriage Tales that monstrosity is rehabilitated and alterity is normalized. In this way The Marriage Tales underpin the wider project of the text not only to acknowledge difference, but to accept difference as inherent to the self.

While Melusine's memorial spaces, as discussed in the previous chapter, are horizontal and vertical—the horizontal drawing together her sisters in their parallel spaces, and the vertical in the function of these spaces to memorialize her own heritage—The Marriage Tales take the vertical through to the next generation. They tell the story of the future of Melusine's legacy, of what it could have been if it were not for the betrayal of Raimondin. The Marriage Tales are forward- and outward-looking; they look to a possible future in the East. The prose romances of the fifteenth century considered in this chapter also look to the East from a context of trouble and apparent decline. They look to the East for an understanding of the past and hope for the future, for origins of identity and potential for outward-looking narrative trajectories. Of course the view is not perfect, as the tale of Florie demonstrates and the clear-eyed view of Christine's reveals. But The Marriage Tales show that difference is found in behavior rather than form, which means that history is not destiny. Change is therefore possible and transgression can be redeemed (indeed, the King of Anssay is rehabilitated, his pursuit of Christine self-cast as "madness"). These stories of the next generation suggest that this is one way forward to a new future.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

These three texts simultaneously look back and forward. They use legendary historical material but also eschew that past to go forward. They keep the maternal link but not the paternal. Their inheritance is not accumulated wealth but innovation and procreation. They privilege individual choice and accomplishment, and celebrate difference and the new.

The single act that cuts through bonds with the past and releases the protagonists to find a new future is patricide. While these acts occur early in the narratives, a generation before Pollymet and the Lusignan brothers, they are nevertheless foundational acts that underpin the rest of the narrative. Indeed the act is endlessly repeated as the legitimate patriline is replaced, denied, or simply put aside. At the same time, however, the matriline is remembered and claimed by all the young men in these tales. In *Melusine*, the fathers Elynas and Raimondin both break their promises, and the paternal line is relegated by powerful mother figures across two successive generations. Meanwhile, the Lusginan brothers carry their matronym, "Lusignan," with them across the known world. In the *Prose Thebes*, father-killing leads to social dislocation, Eddipes is dishonored, and Pollymet, at least once, denies his patrilineage but not his matriline. When asked for his country of origin and his lineage by Adrastus, King of Arge, Pollymet responds: "he was of Thebes, son to Jocasta þe quene."[86] In the *Prose Alexander*, both natural and adopted fathers are threatening, the adopted father trying unsuccessfully to strike Alexander down with his sword.[87] Subsequently, across the full length on the text, Alexander carefully crafts subtle shifts in his patriline, repudiating his paternal heritage and reconstituting his identity with a divine father figure. Queen Olympias, on the other hand, is never forgotten. All the young men—Alexander, Pollymet, and the Lusignan brothers—implicitly or explicitly break with their patriline and their patrimony. They move outward, away from their patrimonial homes, and through this outward and forward-looking focus they all find opportunities for positive futures. Not one of them, however, breaks with his matriline.

The texts themselves look forward through the destabilization of traditionally universalized narratives, such as the privileging of patriline or the unquestionable virtue of chivalry. Instead, the making of meaning is shown to be variable and influenced by point of view, and multiple narratives simultaneously co-exist. In the *Prose Thebes*, Pollymet faces a fork in the narrative road when he must make a choice between two narrative futures: he either returns to the paternal home to fight for his patrimony, entwining his narrative future with his past, or commits to a completely new narrative in Arge and begins a new life with a new family and even a new inheritance coming his way. In the *Prose Alexander* parallel narratives become evident over time. The main protagonist writes his own narrative identity, progressively developing it as his political stature increases.

The violence required to ensure that others accede to that narrative stifles different points of view, but at the same time it suggests that others would tell a different story if they could. The Brahman episode further exemplifies the illusory nature of the apparent breadth of Alexander's narrative influence. Such evident impositions on others suggest that Alexander's is a singular, self-focused point of view, while the narrative itself valorizes difference. When Alexander meets the Amazons he finally concedes that his identity has a boundary, beyond which there are other individuals with their own narratives that are not his to script. In *Melusine*, the tales of Ermynne, Eglantyne, and Christine all offer evidence of parallel narratives that Christian chivalry and patrilineage try to marginalize in the interests of maintaining a unified masculine story. Ermynee and Eglantyne are forcibly silenced, but Christine's alternative interpretation rewrites the narrative of war. Her narrative mode operates outside the discourses of idealized masculinity. Acknowledging the point of view of others, accepting their personal interpretive potential and their capacity to narrate their own identity, is to accept the capacity of individual choice. Moreover, it recognizes the existence of multiple narratives and of multiple possible futures.

Patricide and the undercutting of master narratives not only creates tensions with the established past but also destabilizes the political present that is based upon those traditions. In the context of internal political instability of fifteenth-century England, these three texts acknowledge the individual power of choice and value different points of view. They demonstrate the fruitlessness of backward-looking revenge and instead reward an outward-looking and forward-thinking approach. In difficult times these texts model behavior that turns away from past injustices—that is forward-looking and entrepreneurial. They celebrate individual agentive capacity for interpretation and action. Moreover, these texts appear at a time when national English identity, even Christian identity, is fragile, and engagements with the East are deeply threatening. Nonetheless, these texts trouble the politics of conquest. Alexander achieves his ambitions not only though military conquest but also through narrative conquest; in other words, through the power of oppressive discourses. The Amazon queen succeeds in negotiating a political truce only because she plays the best rhetorical game that he has encountered. At the same time the text ironizes Alexander's constructed narrative, emphasizing its difference from the points of view of others. In *Melusine*, when the king of Anssay

ignores the Christian chivalric code that requires him to protect women alone, he not only brings Christians and Saracens into alignment in terms of transgressive pursuit of sexual desire but also reveals the pretense of that desire as sexual. Both the Saracen advance and his own are unashamedly acquisitive. In this way the episode repositions the Christian/Saracen divide as political. Indeed in the context of an external political threat, these texts do not cast the racial or religious other as monstrous, evil, or even dishonorable. In the *Prose Alexander* the different social structures of the Brahmans and the Amazons are described and acknowledged. Even the Saracens in *Melusine*, the Islamic enemy of the Christian crusades, are individualized through naming, first person speech, and affective representation. The other is thoroughly humanized in every case. In addition, of course, as the Lusignan brothers show, the best humans harbor difference at their very core.

   Which brings me back to the mother. The matriline is privileged in all these texts. Indeed if patrilineage has a tendency to erase the matriline, then patricide must necessarily retrieve the mother from oblivion. Patricide—the killing of the father—is the ultimate expression of his superfluity. Uncertain and liable to mistake, the patriline is simply packed off and replaced by the security and definitiveness of the matriline. In all of these texts, the loyalty of the mother is unwavering. Olympias flees the palace to warn Alexander against the traitor who has murdered Philip, and later writes to him many times to alert him to threats to his own life.[88] In these texts, the mother supports a forward-looking view and the opening up of new horizons. She signals that alternative identities can be scripted and fortunes made. In the *Prose Thebes*, Pollymet's new identity is in Arge, and Jocasta actively works to reorient him in this direction. Moreover, Melusine, the most striking and powerful maternal figure, gives her sons advice that not only itemizes the usual rules of good behavior suitable for princes but also includes extensive directions on good governance.[89] She is anticipating their futures as kings and dukes in new lands. Maintaining reference to the matriline is therefore not simply a nostalgic gesture; rather, it is part of the process of releasing protagonists from the bonds of dubious heritage. This message is made even more powerful coming from the discourse of legendary history. It suggests a need to throw off old identities and construct them anew: to throw off history and look forward. The future is ahead, not behind. Instead, the audience is enlivened to turn and look to the future with a hopeful aspect and a firm step.

NOTES

1. Helen Cooper proposes that the episode in Melusine is modeled on the story of Alexander. "Counter-romance: Civil Strife and Father-Killing in the Prose Romances," in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, eds. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 141–162, p. 156.
2. Cooper, "Counter-romance," pp. 141–142.
3. Cooper, "Counter-romance," p. 142. See also Helen Cooper, "Prose Romances," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 215–230.
4. Megan C. Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the War of the Roses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.
5. Leila K. Norako, "Sir Isumbras and the Fantasy of Crusade," *The Chaucer Review* 48, no. 1 (2013), pp. 166–189. Recent studies of the crusades in medieval literature include Lee Manion, "The Loss of the Holy Land and Sir Isumbras: Literary Contributions to Fourteen-Century Crusade Discourse," *Speculum* 85 (2010), pp. 65–90; Suzanne M. Yeager, *Jerusalem in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Crusade histories include Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London: Penguin, 2007); Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580: from Lyons to Alcazar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Nicholas Paul and Suzanne Yeager (eds.), *Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).
6. Norako, "Fantasy of Crusade," p. 167.
7. Norako, "Fantasy of Crusade," pp. 188–189.
8. Norako, "Fantasy of Crusade," p. 170.
9. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race if Late Medieval France and England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001), pp. 113–146. Cohen argues that there were no real Saracens in the Middle Ages: "The Saracen is a monster, an abjected and fantasmatic body produced through category violation in order to demarcate the limits of the Christian possible," p. 121.
10. Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment," p. 127.
11. Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 3, 45.
12. E.g., the Despenser Crusade of 1383, justified by the Papal Schism, pitched English against French during the Hundred Years' War. Later, from 1420–1434, a series of campaigns against the Hussite Christians was in direct response to the outcome of the resolution of the Papal Schism.
13. Marco Nievergelt, "Conquest, Crusade and Pilgrimage: The Alliterative Morte Arthure in its Late Ricardian Crusading Context," *Arthuriana* 20, no. 2 (2010), pp. 89–116, p. 99.

14. Nievergelt, "Conquest, Crusade and Pilgrimage," pp. 100–101.

15. Petrarch made a written record of his own virtual pilgrimage in the *Itinerarium ad Sepulchrum Domini*. The three days taken to write this text, while a substantial meditative exercise, seem but a fraction of the commitment that would have been required for the actual journey. Yeager, *Jerusalem in Medieval Narrative*, p. 13.

16. Norako, "Fantasy of Crusade," p. 167.

17. Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 3.

18. Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 9.

19. Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 76.

20. The prose *Siege of Thebes*, hereafter the *Prose Thebes*, is an anonymous prose romance extant in one paper manuscript, Rawlinson D82, dated sometime between 1422 and 1450. Friedrich Brie, "Zwei mittelenglische Prosaromane: The Sege of Thebes und The Sege of Troy," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 130 (1913), 40–52 and 269–285.

21. John Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes*, ed. Robert R. Edwards (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001). Hereafter referred to as "Lydgate."

22. In all versions, other than the distant Greek sources (notably Sophocles's *Theban Plays*), the Laius and Oedipus narrative is prefatory or marginal rather than part of the main action.

23. Statius's *Thebaid*, from the first century AD and well known through the Middle Ages, offers the story of Etiocles and Polynices as its main narrative, relegating Oedipus and Laius to flashbacks, asides, and marginal appearances as memories and "shades." Statius, *Thebaid*, ed. & trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2003). The twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Roman de Thebes* opens with an account of Laius's dilemma, reasserting a narrative teleology which was more often sustained than not in later versions. Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (dated c. 1422) offers a prologue that locates the story within Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and begins the tale proper with the building of ancient Thebes and a very full rendition the Layus, Jocasta, and Edippus episodes, which fill the first *pars* of just over 1000 lines. The *Thebaid* and the *Roman de Thebes* are considered to be Lydgate's main sources, while Lydgate's version is accepted as the main source of the *Prose Thebes*. See Robert R. Edwards, "Introduction" in John Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001); Friedrich Brie, "Introduction" in "The Sege of Thebes und The Sege of Troy," 40–47. John Smartt Coley (trans.), *Le Roman De Thebes* (New York and London: Garland, 1986).

24. In this discussion I will refer to three generations—Layus and Jocasta, Edippes and Jocasta, Ethiocles and Pollymet—although the incest of Edippes and Jocasta problematizes generational difference.

25. Similarly, in the *Roman de Thebes* Laius is killed by Oedipus in a mêlée at a tournament. Coley, *Le Roman de Thebes*, p. 5, ll. 191–206.

26. The incident of the death of Laius in the *Thebaid* is not explicitly related, but the crossroads encounter is suggested by indirect references: Laius was "slain by his son's sword" (1.296), Laius's shade sees "the chariot still bloodstained" at the door of his old home (2.66), and old Phorbas, Laius's armor-bearer, years later comments to an adult Antigone "I still held the chariot and the reins with no thought of harm when your neck lay under the horses mangled by cruel blows" (7.355).

27. The riddle episode appears in Lydgate (ll. 624–749) and in the *Roman de Thebes* (ll. 246–324). In the *Thebiad* the riddle of the Sphinx is mentioned (l. 66).

28. *Prose Thebes*, p. 50. Succession is a key point of contention throughout not only the *Prose Thebes* but also the whole Oedipus literary tradition. Laius is without an heir and then gives up his long-desired son in fear, Oedipus is adopted because an heir is lacking, and Oedipus himself has multiple heirs but he fails to effect secure succession.

29. "ij douȝters," "þeym two," "ij knygtes," "ij doughteres," "ij knightes," p. 50.

30. Lydgate, ll. 1456–1505, especially: "But wel I woot that the god of Cupide…his arowes of gold…Ipierced han the knyghtes hertes tweyn," ll. 1480–1485.

31. In the *Prose Thebes* Edippes's death occurs shortly after his discovery of his parentage (p. 49).

32. "grete ordenaunce…in þe moost strengest wise regestred and enrolled with þe surest bondes and oþes vppon þeire goddis þat myght be done" (p. 49). Leitch points out that the *Prose Thebes* evidences a more extensive and sustained use of documentary evidence and legal discourse, more generally than does Lydgate. Leitch reads the legalistic tone positively, as an indication that the rule of law is in the ascendancy. See Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 73–78.

33. "þe strong bondes and oþes made in so hie places of recorde" (p. 51).

34. "þe grete and strong bondes, suerties, oþes, and couenauntes, made by avice of all þe lords of Thebes, with your consent" (p. 51).

35. Malcolm Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*: *Theme and Image in Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 15–33, on p. 15.

36. Hebron notes that the Greek knights who support Adrastus are "exemplary," *The Medieval Siege*, p. 17.

37. Jocasta chastises Ethiocles, but in desperation acts as his envoy. Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*, ll. 3648–3732.

38. Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*, ll. 3822–3873.

39. See also Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, pp. 15–33, particularly p. 19.

40. Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, pp. 28–29.

41. (…down into the ditch, there he fell, and was all beaten and battered; and then Alexander said to him in this way, "False wretch…who presumes to predict things that are to come, just as though you were a prophet, and knew the sacred mysteries of heaven"…And then Anectanabus answered, and said: "I knew well enough…that I should die such a death. Did I not tell you long ago, that my own son should slay me?" "Why, am I your son?" said Alexander. "Yes, truly," said Anectanabus, "I begat you."). My translation. J.S. Westlake (ed.) *The Prose Life of Alexander* EETS O.S. 143 (Oxford: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., and Oxford University Press, 1913), p. 7, l. 36–p. 8, l. 8.

42. The *Prose Alexander* is part of a long tradition of Alexander narratives that spread throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Africa during the Middle Ages and were translated into a corresponding range of languages. A number of branches of the story developed, offering romance and legendary versions of Alexander's life as well as letters, debates, and fragments found in other genres. The geographical spread of the Alexander story extended from Sweden to Ethiopia and as far east as Java. George Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 2. The *Prose Alexander*'s nearest antecedent, the Latin I3 Recension of the *Historia de Prellis*, is extant in no less than 46 manuscripts and a number of incunabula editions. The manuscripts of the I3 Recension, however, are variable, and no specific I3 Recension manuscript has been successfully identified as the source of the *Prose Alexander*. There also appear to be interpolations from the I1 Recension. Gerrit H.V. Bunt "The Art of a Medieval Translator," *Neophilologus* 76 (1992), pp. 147–159. The source of the I3 Recension is the I1 Recension, and this is readily available in an English translation by Dennis M. Kratz entitled *The Romances of Alexander* (New York and London: Garland, 1991). See also A. Hilka and F.P. Magoun, "A List of Manuscripts Containing Texts of the *Historia de Preliis Alexandri Magni*, *Recensions I1*, *I2*, *I3*," *Speculum* 9, no. 1 (1934), 85–86.

43. While the *Prose Alexander* is extant in a unique manuscript and so the missing text is irretrievable, the lost sections, at least in terms of likely narrative elements, can be deduced from sources. Further, *The Wars of Alexander*, a verse version from the same source and produced at a similar time to the *Prose Alexander*, is also extant. Hoyt N. Duggan and Thorlac Turville-Petre (eds), *The Wars of Alexander*, EETS S.S. 10 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

44. Alexander's letters form part of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, which is the basis of all branches of the romance tradition, although their content

differs from one version to another. Gerrit H.V. Bunt, *Alexander the Great in the literature of Medieval Britain* (Groningen, Netherlands: Egbert Forsten, 1994), p. 30. The "historical" tradition, in the Middle Ages, was primarily based on Quintus Curtius Rufus's *Res Gestae Alexandri Magni*, Justin's *Epitome*, and Pompeius Trogus and Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*. Bunt, *Alexander*, p. 3.

45. This trick is at the very start of the narrative and so is missing from the manuscript of the *Prose Alexander*. Nevertheless, it is a consistent narrative element, appearing across the tradition in varying forms and also in *The Wars of Alexander*, which is the contemporaneous verse version produced from the same source.

46. Darius and Alexander's first message exchange occurs on f. 2v, and Darius' death in Alexander's arms occurs on f. 21v. The romance covers 48 folios in total.

47. "desyrande souerayngly for to hafe þe lyfe of the, as þe sone of þe Fader" (p. 54, ll. 24–25)

48. I am not suggesting that Alexander believes himself to be a god. On the contrary, when the Persians worship him as though he were a god, he is "gretly troubled & ritȝe ferde" and asks them to desist (p. 59, ll. 26–35). This does not, however, stop him from claiming a divine heritage. As early as f. 2r in the manuscript Alexander claims to be "consayued of godd Amone" (p. 10, ll. 7–8). He also, confusingly, in the same breath claims Philip as his father.

49. Alexander's expressed desire for knowledge and wisdom punctuates the text and is part of the tradition, but here it is interspersed with a tendency to moralize. Extensive moralizations were not a part of the Alexander tradition. Rather, they are interpolations into the I3 Recension of the *Historia de Preliis*, the direct source of the *Prose Alexander*. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 169.

50. The exchange between Dindimus and Alexander, varying in form, appears throughout the legendary material and became particularly popular with Christian moralists, who align themselves with Dindimus and his critique of a pagan Alexander. In England the "Alexander B" fragment relates exclusively Alexander's encounters with the Gymnosophists and the Brahmans, suggesting a particular interest in this exchange. From Manuscript Bodley 264, dated 1350–1370. The "Alexander B" fragment, like the "Alexander A" fragment, is sourced from the I2 Recension of *Historia de Preliis*, which is not lineally related to the I3 Recension (the source of the *Prose Alexander*). Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 49.

51. "Godde þat made alle þat es in þis werlde, he ordeynede many diuerse thyngeȝ. For warne dyuersitees ware of thyngeȝ þe werld myȝte noghte stande" ("God who made all that is in this world, he ordained many different things. For, were it not for the diversity of things, the world might not survive"), p. 87, ll. 14–17.

52. "I swere ȝow by oure goddeȝ of myghte, þat, & I myghte come to ȝow with an oste, I sulde gare ȝow leue ȝour wrechide lyfe, and by-come mene of armes, als many of ȝow als ware able," ("I swear to you by our mighty gods that if I came to you with an army I should make you leave your wretched life and become men of arms, as many of you as are able"), p. 88, ll. 32–34.

53. ("I, Alexander, son of Philip of Macedonia, after the discomfiture and death of Darius and Porus, have come in war unto this place").

54. "if it be lykynge to þe, to knawe" ("if it pleases you to know," p. 65, l. 35); "we late the witt" ("we let you know," p. 66, l. 19); "perauenture þu knaweȝ noȝte" ("perhaps, you don't yet know," p. 66, ll. 26–27).

55. ("If you come against us we let you know that we will fight with you with all our might. If it happens that you have the victory over us, it shall not be honor to you because you have defeated women. But if we conquer you, it shall be a high honor to us that we can overcome so glorious an emperor, and to you it shall be an utter disgrace.")

56. E.g., in *The Wars of Alexander* while the arrangement is similar to that in the *Prose Alexander*, there is the additional requirement of the provision of Amazonian brides for Alexander's knights. Duggan and Turville-Petre, *The Wars of Alexander*, p. 126, ll. 3900–3901. In *Kyng Alisaunder*, the Amazons provide a contribution of twenty thousand warriors to Alexander's host, all of whom were "faire maydens of white chere" who were "come-lich in bed." G.V. Smithers (ed.), *Kyng Alisaunder*, EETS O.S. 227 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 317, ll. 6043, 6045. Other examples include *The Greek Alexander Romance*, in which the Amazons pay 100 talents of gold every year and 500 women warriors and 100 horses on rotation. Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1991), p. 145. In Pseudo-Callisthenes the same tribute is paid, but instead of "100 horses" it is "100 horsemen." A.M. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 143.

57. Elizabeth Baynham, "Alexander and the Amazons," *The Classical Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2001), pp. 115–126, p. 123.

58. When asked why he wishes to conquer the whole world, Alexander responds that it he is fulfilling the "providence of God" (p. 74, l, 3).

59. Portions of this section have appeared in "Courtly Love and the Tale of Florie in the Middle English *Melusine*," Leeds Studies in English 35, (2004), pp. 101–120. There has been some discussion of the historical links in The Marriage Tales, but these tend to focus more on the issues of French political legitimacy. Recent discussions include E. Jane Burns, "Magical Politics from Poitou to Armenia: Mélusine, Jean de Berry and the Eastern Mediterranean," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*

43, no. 2 (2013), pp. 275–301; Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "Fiction and History: The Cypriot Episode in Jean d'Arras's *Mélusine*," in Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, *Melusine of Lusignan*, pp. 185–200.

60. As discussed in Chapter 2, during Raimondin's testing his cousin knows that Raimondin is keeping something from him.

61. As discussed in Chapter 4, Elynas broke the cultural taboo against visiting a mother in childbed.

62. This repetition echoes the intergenerational repetition of the problematic father–son relationship found in the *Prose Thebes*.

63. Positioning these campaigns as rescue goes some way to ameliorating the problematics of an outright conquest by the Lusignan brothers: they are rescuing young heiresses from unwanted suitors and fighting back the progress of the "Paynemys," "Saracens," or "Turks." The hesitation of two of the brothers to accept offers of marriage further detracts from the view that feminine rescue is a winner-takes-all maneuver.

64. While Melusine directs Raimondin in strategies of land acquisition, the land upon which she builds her realm technically belongs to him. This is signaled by the letters of gift, which secure the original landholding around the fountain *de soyf*: "Seelled of the grette Seal of the Erle, by thassent and relacion of alle the Barons of the land/whiche also dide putte theire Seelles thereto" (*Melusine*, p. 42, ll. 4–6).

65. Weiss, "The wooing woman," p. 156.

66. For an expanded discussion on the tale of Florie see Shaw, "Courtly Love and the Tale of Florie in the Middle English Melusine."

67. "And the pucelle was so joyous of these nouuelles that she had neuer in her naturel lyf so grete joye. For know ye wel she loued so entierly guyon þat all her joye was of hym" (p. 166, ll. 25–28).

68. Interestingly Donald in the Middle English edition chooses to head the page with "Guion falls in love with Flory," interpreting Guyon's formulaic courtly behavior as love, but he ignores Florie's love which is clearly explicated in the text. The editor does, however, acknowledge Ermynee's love for the unseen and unmet Urian, heading p. 135 with "Ermine in Love."

69. "Ma demoiselle, comment vous a il esté depuis que je me parti de cy? Et celle lui respond: Sire, il ne me puet ester gueres bien, quant Monseigneur mon pere est trespassé de ce siècle. Jhesucrist, par sa saincte grace, lui face pardon a l'ame. Mais, comme povre orpheline, je vous remercie des vaisseaulx que vous m'envoyastes et de l'avoir qui estoit dedens," D'Arras, p. 144; translated by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox as: "'How have you fared since I left here, mademoiselle?' he asked her. 'Scarcely well, sire,' she replied, 'on account of my father's death; may the grace of Jesus Christ be upon his soul. As a poor orphan, I thank you for the ships you sent me and for the goods they contain.'" Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, *Jean d'Arras. Melusine; or, the Noble History of Lusignan*, p. 112 (see Chap. 4, n. 61).

70. Susan Crane provides a history of the English reactions to and adaption of courtliness in *Insular Romance*. See particularly Chapter 4: "Measuring Conventions of Courtliness," and 5: "Adapting Conventions of Courtliness." Crane, *Insular Romance* (see Introd., n. 56).

71. The equality of lovers is shown to be a common characteristic of early English romance in Alexander, "Women as lovers," pp. 24–40. This characteristic was also noted by Gervase Mathew and interpreted by him as "completely un-*courtois*." Gervase Mathew, "Marriage and *Amour Courtois* in Late Fourteenth-Century England," in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (London: 1947), p. 129, as cited in Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 136. Perhaps the most famous example of the difference between the English and French traditions is the different treatment of Lancelot and Guenevere by Chrétien and Malory as noted in Chapter 2.

72. In *d'Arras* this moment of crowning is not described and the implicit agent of Guyon's transformation is the marriage itself. The parallel section in *d'Arras* reads: "Lors furent fianciez et le lendemain furent espousez a grant solennité, et fu la feste grant et noble et dura xv. jours. Et avant que la feste departist, tous les barons firent hommage au roy Guyon" (p. 144).

73. "they said & sware that syth theyre lady wold not haue hym to her lord/ they shuld shewe to hym that he dide wrong to the pucelle and to them also" (p. 184, ll. 1–4)

74. "doubte you not therof, my lady, For yf it playse god, he shal not haue so moche of puyssance as long as we shall mowe stere our owne bodyes" (p. 185, ll. 27–29)

75. Christine says to her lords: "he wyl haue by force" (p. 185, l. 26), and Anthony uses the same language: "rauysshe by force" (p. 203, ll. 26–27).

76. In a much discussed passage of Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, which purports to describe the custom of England, the rape of a woman alone is condemned: "a knight, finding a damsel or girl alone...should he rape her, he would be disgraced forever in all courts" (Vv. 1313 ff, Owen, *Chrétien*). However, Gravdal has convincingly shown how the language of literature reconfigures rape—it is sanitized, minimized, made humorous or even heroic—and, as the linguistic paradigms of literature find their way through the notaries and judges into the language of the law, they "directly affect the way deeds are perceived, controlled, authorized, or penalized," Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 140. Rape is an extremely problematic issue. It can be read here in more simplistic terms simply because it is a public threat against an important woman.

77. For a reading of the chivalric displays of the Lusignan brothers as glamorous see Baumgartner, "Fiction and History," pp. 185–200. Baumgartner reads the martial adventures of Urian and Guyon as "joyful, if not downright festive, warfare" (p. 196).

78. In his introduction to *Chivalry*, Maurice Keen lists a number of characteristics which were encapsulated in an idealized notion of chivalry, as found in medieval texts on the subject, including loyalty, truth, courtesy (especially toward women), hardiness, prowess, largess, humility, and piety (one should also be nobly spoken and well clad). Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 9.

79. The ideal of chivalry (as outlined by Keen) and its reality were two very different things. For Richard Kaeuper chivalry was "a code of violence in defense of a prickly sense of honor (and the honorable acquisition of loot to be distributed in open-handed largess) just as thoroughly as it was a code of restraint," Richard Kaeuper, "The societal role of chivalry in romance: Northwestern Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 97–114, on pp. 99–100.

80. Donald defines "Paynim" or "paynym" as "pagan," but the term is used interchangeably with "saracyn." The French text also refers to "Saracen" at these points. In *Melusine* "paymin" and "saracyn" both refer to followers of Islam: the Sultan of Damascus calls on "machomet my god" (p. 285, o. 35); Zelodius of Craco is identified as both a "paynem" and a "Sarasyn" (p. 216, ll. 30, 32) within three lines; the Caliphe of Bandas, the "Saudan of Barbarye" and "kyng Anthenor of Anthioche" all head armies of "sarasyns" (p. 264, l. 29–p. 265, l. 4).

81. The verbal play between the name "Chrystyn" and the king as a "Crystyn" knight further draws attention to this point.

82. Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment," p. 121 ff.

83. For a discussion of the progression of monstrous mother-marks across all of Melusine's sons see Douglas Kelly, "The Domestication of the Marvelous in the Melusine Romances," Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, *Melusine of Lusignan*, pp. 32–47 (see Chap. 1, n. 7).

84. E.g., see p. 131, l. 35; p. 175, l. 32; p. 199, l. 27; p. 203, l. 4; p. 231, l. 18.

85. Anthony says: "Duchesse, take good heede of your fruyte that groweth in your blood, and cheryssh your self/and yf goddis grace gyue that it be a sone, make hym to be baptysed & named Bertrand, For thus is my playsire" (p. 218, ll. 30–34). He therefore distinguishes between Christine's "self" and her bodily reproductive function "in your blood."

86. *Prose Thebes*, p. 50.

87. *Prose Alexander*, p. 11, ll. 2–3.

88. *Prose Alexander*, p. 12, pp. 27–35; p. 110, ll. 4–6.

89. *Melusine*, p. 110, l. 18–p. 114, l. 12; p. 190, l. 11–p. 191, l. 14.

Conclusion

The imaginative literature discussed in this book engages directly and indirectly with tensions that real medieval women experienced in the real world. The text of *Melusine* celebrates the heroine's capacities and achievements, but it also suggests a difficulty in acknowledging these contributions: they can go unrecognized, or even be actively undercut by cultural narratives that stereotype women and encourage negative readings of their characteristics and behaviors. The text highlights the ways in which these cultural narratives have a tendency to override individual experiential knowledge.

Before the main narrative begins, the intrinsic prologue of *Melusine* invokes authoritative discourses to construct a taxonomy of being that destabilizes entrenched hierarchies of gender. At first glance this taxonomy appears to tap into the prevailing cultural narratives of alterity, which work to ontologically negate the other (including gendered, cultural, racial, and religious others), but it reworks the hierarchy by pressing into service a discourse of divinely inspired wonder. This discourse reconfigures alterity as a wonder of God, and thereby shifts it from ontological negation as the other of man to a place above the otherworldly line, close to God and beyond human enquiry. In other words, the taxonomy reworks alterity from ontological negation to ontological difference. While alterity is ungendered in the taxonomy, the place of man is repeatedly marked as such, casting women outside the hierarchy in the first instance, until they are retrieved by their connection with the fairy other. This text explicitly

marks the feminine as other, but it is an otherness aligned with the marvels of God, unassailable by patriarchal appropriations.

This maneuver in the intrinsic prologue establishes a particular textual habitus that encourages a certain reading position. Approaching the text from this reading position opens up new and proactive engagements with a range of discourses offered up for consideration in the broader text. The discourse of love and marriage, the spatial practices of women, the operation of individual and collective memory, and the legacies of patrimony are all explored through the tale. These discourses, all of which operated at social and cultural levels, were often drawn into critical conversation with the medieval imagination through the medium of Middle English romance literature. Within the continuity of this tradition, the text of *Melusine* offers particularly strong encouragement to the audience to embrace a critical perspective, perhaps even to recognize the institutional hierarchies of power that underpin gender relations. This is not to say that men are presented in the text as unquestionably bad and women unquestionably good. On the contrary, negotiations between the sexes, and those between parents and children, are complex and multi-layered. What is evident, however, is that the text seems aware of the difficulties women face within these contexts. There are two strong points that come out of this text. First, cultural memory has a tendency to write out women's capacities, activities, and achievements, and the text works to redress this imbalance. Second, the answer is not in a separation of the sexes, although this might be an interim tactic; rather, it is in a mutuality of trust and a continuing cycle of exchange and negotiation between the sexes, all within a context that acknowledges the value of difference.

The tale plays with the idea that women and men are different, or rather that women are different from men (as men are presumed to be the ideal instantiation of humanity). Through a positive collision of the medieval predilection for system and order on the one hand, and conceptions of medieval wonder on the other, the text presents the possibility that if women are different, they might be different in good ways. Melusine's hybridity literally removes her from cultural narratives that presuppose feminine inadequacy. The text appropriates the strangeness of Melusine and her fairy nature as a strategy to turn women's "otherness" into something positive. It plays with the idea of the "monstrosity" of Melusine—and by extension all women—by making her a productive good in the community. In this way the text recuperates women from ontological negation and places them above the otherworldly line.

Ultimately the legacy of this text is multifaceted, but, in addition to its celebration of the accumulation of wealth, and in addition to the individual, outward-looking, colonizing successes of the next generation, the text demonstrates the importance of Pressine's gift of subjecthood to Melusine—a gift that Melusine then passes onto her sons and that is later instantiated in their capacity to reconfigure relations between the sexes. The text positions the strategy for the future, or at least one strategy: the resuscitation of women as fully participating subjects in the community, with their own capacities, spaces, and memories; in other words, their own identities. The Lusignan line comes to an end not because of the marital inadequacies of its menfolk, nor because of the immorality of its women. Its demise is caused by one thing alone: the repeated betrayals of individual women by the men closest to them. Moreover, the text details in each instance how such calamities could have been avoided. The text acknowledges the difficulties presented by cultural narratives and how they override individual experiential knowledge, but at the same time it urges reflection and the acknowledgment of individual difference. The text does not have a happy ending, but it outlines precisely the way to achieve one.

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Index